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**Making the transition from university to
the workplace: the emotional
experiences of Newly Qualified Social
Workers**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Social
Work

University of Sussex

November 2018

Declaration

WORK NOT SUBMITTED ELSEWHERE FOR EXAMINATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signed:

Date: 5th November 2018

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Abstract

Debates about the level of readiness of social work graduates to meet the demands of the workplace first arose in the late 1970's. These debates are well documented and continue today in the Conservative government's reform of social work and social work education. What is less well documented is how Newly Qualified Social Workers experience the transition to their first professional social work role upon completion of their social work degree. This small-scale qualitative research study explores the emotional experiences of social work graduates in England making this transition and identifies the role and influence of individual, cultural and structural factors in shaping this experience.

Five graduates were interviewed on completion of their social work studies and then again approximately six months into practice. All participants worked in statutory children and families' teams. The methodological design took a narrative psychosocial approach with the voice-centred relational method employed to co-construct narratives of the participants' emotional experience of transition. Three dominant themes from the literature were combined to structure an additional thematic analysis of the data: the current competing conceptualisations of social work, the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace, and the increasing dominance of the neoliberalised work environment. The generated findings were then further explored with two separate focus groups of practitioners, not involved in the original study, to consider the analytic generalisability of the conclusions.

The findings suggest that the emotional experience of transition is significantly influenced by a Newly Qualified Social Worker's own early childhood experiences and personal dispositions, the availability of containing experiences and the influence of the neoliberalised workplace environment. Thus, Newly Qualified Social Workers' emotions can be considered to be both psychosocially and socially structured within a political context.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This introductory chapter describes the backdrop to the study. It begins with an outline of my own formative experiences of transition and identity, and how these influenced my interest in the selected research area. I then outline relevant aspects of my professional roles as a probation officer, social work educator and regulator and how these experiences shaped the focus of my research topic.

The journey on the professional doctorate has been intellectually stimulating and emotionally rewarding. I outline how I have developed as a researcher, alongside my professional roles, over the past five years of study. I highlight how, through Phase I and II of the doctoral programme, I pursued and explored common themes of personal interest in my studies, interweaving these themes through the mandatory assessed pieces of work towards developing the research focus in Phase III. The substantive pieces of assessed work already undertaken as part of the doctoral programme are reflected upon and include a small-scale study which shaped the research topic, and the critical analytical study (CAS) which primarily conducted the initial literature review in 2015 for this thesis.

Following this, I consider the actual research questions and how these were shaped and developed over the past two years in response to my broadening intellectual curiosity, increasing empathic connectedness to the emotional experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) and through regular critical and reflective discussions with my research supervisors.

The last section of this introductory chapter outlines the focus of the study, its aims and objectives, and how the thesis is structured. This provides the reader with a roadmap to follow my journey through the professional doctorate and this thesis study.

1.2 Researcher positionality

1.2.1 Personal identity and the identifiable

Personal identity, as for most people, played a significant part in my early life and continues to do so today. My father was a pioneer immigrant arriving in Britain from India in the early 1950's to meet the spare labour capacity in the manufacturing industry. His life and many of the men that came with him was highly paradoxical, working extremely hard and living in very poor and harsh conditions. These personal hardships in Britain were not disclosed to their families back home, partly because they did not want to accept the realities of it themselves, nor did they wish to upset their kin. My mother joined my father some six years

later, and I was born in the early 1960's in a northern industrial town. Growing up as a teenager in Britain was difficult; the external environment was generally hostile to new Asian communities with regular National Front marches held throughout the 1970s in my home town. The home environment was equally stressful; trying to mediate the exposure to conservative Asian and liberalised western cultures which invariably created both internal and familial conflicts. It wasn't until entering social work education in 1988 that I began to feel comfortable and confident in a coherent sense of self and began to holistically acknowledge both my Indian and English heritage. Becoming a father in 1991 consolidated the formation of my identity in a confident sense of self.

In 2006, I emigrated with my family to Canada. While my father had himself emigrated to another country some 50 years previously for economic reasons, a disillusionment with the political environment in the UK and the resurgence of right-wing nationalism and racism drove my motivation. Having two young children at this time, I wanted to provide them with an upbringing in a more tolerant environment than I had experienced. The early years in Canada were liberating on many fronts, and it became apparent that up until this point in my life, others had implicitly ascribed my identity based on my ethnicity, skin colour and working-class status. This ascription of identity made me identifiable to others, so I could be associated with a specific section of the community whether I felt I belonged to that grouping or not.

As a relatively 'new' country, Canada was still forming its own national identity as a unified nation after several decades of mass immigration. I felt more able to define my sense of self in this context and take pride in my Indian and English heritage and developing Canadian identity. I returned to live in England in 2015 and today, as I reach my mid-fifties, my identity is bound up in my past but also in my present commitment to human rights and compassion for others. Understanding the true nature of others is achievable through an understanding of their identity and sense of self within emotional, psychological, social and cultural contexts. Thus, the nature of identity and transition are key considerations in this thesis, through the exploration of the inter-relationship between the psychosocial domains of individual experience and the structural contexts within which they occur.

In conclusion, my experience of personal identity has been of conflict, flux and strength. It has been contingent on context, culture, geography and time and for a large part of my life ascribed by others as part of my social positioning in society. It has been, and remains, an essential part of my emotional and psychological wellbeing and a significant part of my journey towards social work education. These experiences are likely to resonate with the

personal journeys of others, so the early experiences of students, before they arrive at the university, are essential understandings in the context of social work education. Social work students should be facilitated through the educational process to understand their social positioning in society before they attempt to understand that of the people they seek to support and help as social workers.

1.2.2 The accidental Probation Officer

The story of my professional career begins in 1988 on my entry to a qualifying social work programme where I followed the probation stream. My decision to undertake social work education and training was not influenced by any altruistic motivation nor from having gained any related work experience. It stemmed purely from a curiosity to understand the aetiological processes and pathways that led some, but not others, towards crime. Given my naivety about the purposes of social work and lack of experience before entering social work education, my final placement practice teacher openly articulated her reservations about my success on the first day of my final placement. She could not see, given what I had been taught on my course and my lack of probation knowledge and skills, how I could meet the requirements of a final placement within the allocated timeframe.

Despite this, I completed my social work training. My success was down in part to my own determination to learn and succeed, but more significantly to the underlying belief and commitment that my practice teacher placed in me. Her ability to provide emotional and cognitively containing learning experiences allowed me to articulate my anxieties and fears, make and learn from my mistakes and be open to criticisms about my practice.

I entered my first qualified role as a Probation Officer in 1990, clearer about the centrality of altruistic imperatives at the very foundation of social work's humanitarian mission (Wakefield, 1993). The early formative experience of positive containment (Bion, 1970) during the placement modelled and influenced the development of an empathic way of thinking and working with individuals that has since featured as a core and essential aspect in the multiple professional roles that I have since held.

1.2.3 'Surface and depth' in social work

As a Probation Officer, I was involved in the early development of multi-disciplinary community-based treatment approaches with men convicted of sexual offending against children. In the late 1970s, the revival of interest in criminology in offenders' biographies and inner emotional, and sometimes unconscious experiences (Smith, 2004) influenced my orientation towards psychoanalytical and psychodynamic informed ways of thinking, being and working. I became interested in theories of narrative, masculinity, and unconscious

mechanisms of defence (Bottoms and McWilliams, 1979; Jefferson, 1994; Howe, 1996 cited in Parton, 1996) and how meanings embedded within the unconscious could be revealed through in-depth interpretative work (Gadd and Farrall, 2004, p.148). The emerging knowledge and practice base for 'sex offender work' at this time was explicitly underpinned in the Probation Service by a pro-feminist social analysis of sexual violence (Herman, 1990). This philosophical stance hugely influenced my understanding of the patriarchal nature of society and the current and historical marginalisation of women and children through the unequal distribution of power and resources.

In retrospect, these early formative years of my professional career still influence and shape my philosophical and theoretical understandings of the construction of knowledge and views of reality, and thus underpin the methodological design of this study as discussed later.

1.2.4 Re-surfacing themes from practice and research

During my eleven years of professional practice as a social worker, I experienced the emotional intensity of practice in work with sex offenders and latterly with victims of sexual abuse within a therapeutic context. In hindsight, a significant factor that mitigated the potential for vicarious traumatisation (Michalopoulos and Aparicio, 2012) in these challenging areas of practice was the structured support mechanisms that were made available to me. These took the form of monthly independent team consultancy, regular supervision and structured de-briefings by co-workers as part of the planned work. The workplace setting was also promoted as a secure base for workers, whereby the legitimacy of emotion was considered a key part of assessing the efficacy of practice interventions through interpretation of the processes of transference and countertransference between workers and clients.

On entry to academia and social work teaching in 2001, I continued to pay due regard to the centrality of emotion and affect as a key part of human experience by acknowledging the emotional experiences of learning on students. This followed the earlier influence on me of psychodynamically-orientated research such as Salzberger-Wittenberg (1983), considering what lay 'beneath the surface' when dealing with distressed students through the interpretation of their anxiety as a defence mechanism (Cramer, 2006).

In 2012, I left UK academia to work as a social work regulator in Canada. This provided an opportunity to reflect on UK social work from an alternative contextual and perceptual stance. What became apparent was how far neoliberal ideology and principles had shaped and influenced contemporary UK social work over a period of several decades. This shaping was towards individual self-sufficiency in society that still in the current context, questions

the purpose and role of social work and social work education. Alongside this, the increasing emotional intensity of social work practice and its impact on front-line workers was acknowledged by the Government-commissioned Munro review of the child protection system in England (Munro, 2011), which highlighted how the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace had led to poor performance on the part of social workers and increased risks to service users.

To conclude this brief overview, the key themes that punctuate my personal and professional experience as a social worker re-surfaced and coalesced within this research thesis. Issues of identity, emotion, anxiety and containment and the conscious and unconscious domains of experience all formed part of the contextual framework for the thesis.

1.3 Learnings from the early stages of the doctoral programme

1.3.1 Initial exploratory study

Learning on the Doctorate in Social Work (DSW) programme during Phase I and II was embedded in exploring the role of emotion and affect on social workers. Affect is perhaps best defined in the literature by Wetherell (2012, p. 4) as ‘embodied meaning-making’, adding that ‘mostly this will be something that could be understood as human emotion’. The first DSW assignment developed my substantive knowledge of research studies that established correlations between emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2000), resilience and the psychological wellbeing of early career social workers in the workplace (Grant and Kinman, 2012). Due to living and working as a social work regulator in Canada at the time (2013), the second assignment was based on a small-scale exploratory study that considered how far Canadian newly qualified social work graduates felt prepared to enter the workplace.

While the findings from this small Canadian study did not directly address the research question I had initially posed, the study identified three inter-related themes across the five respondents: the perceived importance of the final placement; the perceived lack of balance in the curriculum between theory and practice and the difficulties in securing employment upon qualification. These findings raised further questions about the extent to which educators and students held shared expectations for social work education. What was also evident was the increasing commodification of higher education and students' expectations to be competitive in the employment market upon graduation.

This mishap in the study between intention and outcome developed my researcher insight into the necessity in qualitative research of ‘going with the data’ and not allowing research findings to be constrained or misinterpreted by the conscious, or indeed unconscious,

imposition of the intended research aims. It also provided first-hand experiences of the contextual nature of social work with its role and function dependent upon the country within which it is practised. However, in common with other parts of the world, social work remains a highly contested and political activity (Harris, 2002).

During this phase of study, I learnt to see the necessity for methodological designs to be fluid and sufficiently flexible to adapt to the evolving and changing needs and direction of the research. A further key point of learning was around the underlying need to remain true to participants' stories and voices; this was a central consideration in this final research thesis.

This period of study and learning on the DSW programme developed my knowledge of methodology and the inter-relatedness of epistemological, ontological and axiological concerns. What became equally evident was that the clarity and applicability of findings are heavily dependent on the analytic and reflexive abilities of the researcher, and this greatly determined the validity of a qualitative research study. I gained insights into the power relations inherent in insider-research approaches and how belonging to the professional community being researched, potentially had significant benefits but also needed to take account of the ethical dimensions arising from the power relations between researchers and researched.

In hindsight, Phases I and II of the programme developed my confidence and skills to read, critically evaluate and produce small-scale research. Understanding the inter-relations between substantive, methodological and conceptual knowledge concerning social research was a crucial area regarding my academic development during these periods of doctoral study.

1.3.2 The Critical Analytical Study

Following on from the earlier assessed pieces of work the critical analytical study (CAS) incorporated an integrative review methodology to explore whether new knowledge could be generated from the literature on the extent to which neoliberal ideologies impinged on the professional identity development of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs). The integrative review method was chosen as it can summarise past empirical and theoretical literature while incorporating diverse methodologies to capture the context, processes and subjective elements of the topic (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). The transition of NQSWs from the university setting to the workplace was considered explicitly as this was a key phase which the NQSW negotiated in attempting to establish an emotionally resilient identity in the professional workplace (Bates et al., 2010; Moriarty et al., 2011).

What emerged from this CAS was an understanding of the significant impact of neoliberal ideas and practices right across the sphere of social work over the past four decades, including effects on policy, practice, the delivery of services, social work education and on social workers themselves. The conclusion drawn was that neoliberalism had been prolific in social work, particularly since the late 1970s, which coincided with the increasing concerns and impacts of neoliberal ideas and practices across most aspects of public life (Giddens, 1998; Chomsky, 1999). The extent of the impact and influence of these neoliberal ideas and practices on social work and social workers themselves are mapped out more fully within the context of wider legal, policy and political changes over the past forty years in the next chapter. The CAS further sharpened the focus of the thesis topic and ultimately determined the nature of the research question for investigation.

1.4 The focus of the thesis

Since 2001, I have taught qualifying social work education in several higher education institutions both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. While cognisant from my own practice experience that social work at times is a highly stressful vocation, the higher rates of reported burnout and stress in the profession became increasingly alarming to me towards the end of 2010 (Lloyd et al. 2002; Rose, 2003; Collins, 2008). The impact of work-related stress on social workers' mental health and wellbeing and the likely consequences for their service users (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998; Horder, 1999; Morris, 2005; Nissy et al., 2005) began to raise questions for me as to what may be the contributory factors. Was the inability of social workers to adequately cope with front-line practice a consequence of the inadequacies of social work education? Alternatively, was the inability to cope a lack of personal resilience on the part of the individual social worker themselves? What role did the workplace play and what opportunities for the containment of anxiety and emotion arising from direct practice were provided? These questions and concerns drew me towards this doctoral study and to primarily explore how educators and employers could better equip trainee social workers to deal with, and manage the pressures and stresses arising from direct front-line practice.

The starting point for exploring this educational and practice imperative was to investigate how NQSWs emotionally experienced the transition to the workplace and what personal and structural factors influenced this. By theorising NQSWs' emotional experiences of transition to the workplace environment, the thesis makes a distinctive contribution by merging psychosocial perspectives with structural contexts regarding the literature review, methodology and the findings. The key argument presented in the thesis is that the current

iterations of neoliberalism in its manifestation, operation and transfiguration penetrate the individual psychological domain of NQSWs by diminishing spaces for the experience and expression of emotion within the context of the social work workplace. While psychosocial constructions and structural conditions are at best, heterogeneous and, at worst, divided, this small-scale in-depth exploratory study aims to start such a merger. The utilisation of the voice-centred relational method as a relevant methodology to explore this inter-relationship is also claimed as an original contribution; utilised to reveal that NQSWs' emotions are both psychosocially and socially structured within the current prevailing neoliberal political context within which the profession of social work operates.

1.4.1 Research aims and objectives

The purpose of the research thesis was to explore how NQSWs experienced their emotional transition from the completion of a qualifying social work programme to their first professional role in the workplace. The study aimed to investigate how this process of transition was emotionally experienced and what could be understood about how to better support NQSWs in establishing themselves in the workplace.

Drawing on insights into the emotional experiences of NQSWs was intended to enhance the limited body of empirical knowledge that exists about the emotional experiences of newly qualified workers and their transition to qualified practice. It also aimed to highlight what factors could support the transition and consolidation of NQSWs into the workplace, thus informing the practices of both qualifying social work programmes and social work employers. The overarching aim of the research thesis was to lay the initial foundations for the tenets of an emotionally intelligent curriculum for social work education (Shulman, 2005), which places more emphasis on affect, or 'embodied meaning-making', as a key domain of learning and development for trainee social workers (Morrison, 2007).

1.4.2 Research question

A structure for the analysis and an overall framework for the thesis was provided by the primary research question: *How do Newly Qualified Social Workers experience the emotional aspects of their transition to the workplace, and what factors and processes influence their experience?*

The following sub-questions enabled this over-arching research question to be addressed:

- I. How do NQSWs emotionally experience their transition to the workplace and what in their view supports or hinders this?

- II. What role do personal histories, individual traits and relational or organisational factors play in NQSWs' emotional responses to this transition?
- III. To what extent do NQSWs feel their qualifying programme prepared them for their transition to the workplace?
- IV. What mechanisms or processes in the employing agency support or hinder NQSWs in their transition to the workplace?

1.5 The structure of the thesis

This introductory chapter has provided some background information for this thesis. It began with a brief introduction of my personal history, emphasising the role of personal identity and experiences of transition. It mapped my development as a practitioner and researcher and provided a brief discussion on how my concerns emerged about the emotional wellbeing of NQSWs over time. It then set out the focus of the research, the aims and objectives and the key research questions for exploration.

Chapter Two begins with revisiting the findings of the Critical Analytical Study and updates the legislative, theoretical and research literature relating to the research question. It reviews three dominant themes: the current competing conceptualisations of social work; the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace, and the increasing dominance of the neoliberalised work environment. These themes are combined to provide a critical lens with which to understand the emotional experience of transition of NQSWs to the workplace.

This chapter also outlines the enduring challenges by successive governments on social work values and the fundamental tenets of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice. The literature on professional resilience is considered to highlight the extent to which this is regarded as an individualised attribute of the practitioner, or an inter-actional process between the practitioner and the workplace environment.

Chapter Three sets out the overall design of the study and the methodological framework on which it is based. This framework combines a narrative inquiry with psychosocial approaches. The chapter also outlines the research procedures that were followed to collate and generate the data and the analysis of this data using the voice-centred relational method (VCRM) combined with thematic analysis. The use of the VCRM and its application to merge the psychosocial and structural contexts is highlighted. It concludes with a discussion of the ethical and axiological imperatives underpinning this research study.

Chapter Four focuses on a full analysis of an emblematic case of the data sets using the VCRM. It incorporates a two-stage approach to explore the change in the emotional

experiences of the participant pre- and post-transition to the workplace. It also considers the role of personal history and dispositions on the process of adaptation to this transition.

Chapter Five extends the findings from the emblematic case to all the data sets using thematic analysis. It focuses specifically on the participants' pre- journeys to social work education and what social work educators may need to take account of in the learning processes offered to students.

Chapter Six considers the emotional experiences of the participants' transition to the workplace by examining the significant themes of transition, emotion and the workplace environment to highlight the inter-relation between individual psychosocial factors and the broader contextual domains in shaping emotional experience. The generated findings are explored with two separate focus groups of NQSWs, not involved in the main study as part of a process of knowledge transfer. These groups are at the start and end of their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) respectively, and the analytic generalizability of the thesis conclusions are explored.

Chapter Seven interrogates the research questions to set out the important themes emerging from the findings and draws out the implications of this research. While the findings of this thesis may not be generalisable given the small sample, this thesis aims to theorise the merger of the structural understandings of issues in social work and the psychosocial domains. This merger is crucial in understanding NQSWs' emotions as being both psychosocially and socially structured within the political context in which they operate.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Eight, outlines the key recommendations for social work educator and employers. It reflects on the research design and the experience of undertaking this study and what may have been done differently. It also outlines the limitations of the study and makes recommendations for future areas of research. Finally, there is a consideration of the extent to which this thesis study achieved its aims and sets out the key aspects of its contribution to the overall knowledge in this field.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter One, this study aims to explore the emotional experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) as they transition upon graduation from the university to the workplace environment. A fundamental proposition made in this study is that these emotional experiences are to a large extent psychosocially and socially structured in the current political context within which social work is practiced. Thus, the literature review aims to merge understandings of the psychosocial and emotional domains of NQSWs' experience with the political, structural, and organisational contexts within which they work. The extent to which NQSWs' emotional experiences are shaped and embedded within this broader social context can then be highlighted.

The nature and impact of these broader contexts on emotional experience can be identified by evaluating the historical changes in social work and social work education that have taken place since the late 1970s, alongside the simultaneous emergence of neoliberalism as the dominant political ideology and the changing role of emotion in social work. Thus, the two key questions to be addressed through a review of the literature are:

- I. How has the emergence of neoliberal government policies since the 1970s influenced the shaping of social work education and what is the relationship between past conflicts and the present challenges facing social work education?
- II. How do the current neoliberalised conditions within which the profession of social work operates act to marginalise emotion in the workplace?

The search strategy was shaped, refined and expanded from the Critical Analytical Study (CAS) which acted primarily as the literature review with further literature searches undertaken between 2016 and 2018 to improve and reshape the focus of the research questions (discussed in Chapter One). The literature review begins with reviewing the key changes in social work education since the late 1970s in England. Three distinct political eras are identifiable within this period; New Right Conservatism (1979-1997); New Labour (1997-2010) and the current Conservative government (2010-2018 (Coalition with the Liberal Democrats 2010-2015)). These changing political climates in England provide the context within which to critically locate the reforms of social work and social work education. Thus, the first part of the review is organised around these major political eras following a chronological timeline highlighting the development of a series of wider legal, policy and economic changes in England. Key historical events related to social work are discussed to retrospectively consider what they signified and laid the foundations for in the

subsequent changes to social work education. Taking a historical perspective on social work education's evolution over this period shows the increasing influence of the neoliberal political landscape in England. Harris's conceptual framework of the processes of neoliberalism (Harris, 2014) is applied to highlight how neoliberal ideas and processes have influenced and impacted the past and present shaping of social work education.

The second part of the literature review considers the role of emotion in the workplace and the concerns around the high rates of stress and burnout among early career social work practitioners. The review attempts to contextualise these concerns within the reforms of social work education and the emerging understandings of the role of resilience. Professional resilience in the workplace is increasingly considered to act as a buffer against workplace stress, so the literature is reviewed to explore the extent to which professional resilience can be viewed as an individualised attribute; the responsibility lies with the practitioner and social work education to develop this. In contrast, how far can professional resilience be understood as an interactional feature between the practitioner and the workplace environment, thus dependent on the level of workplace support that is provided to the practitioner? The concept of professional resilience is an important consideration within the context of the increasing emotional intensity of practice and the need to safeguard the psychological wellbeing of early career practitioners. The concluding section of this chapter discusses the key findings of the literature review and highlights the pertinent questions that arose. These questions are then addressed by the methodological approach taken in this study, which also sought to bring together the psychosocial and structural domains in its design.

2.2 Key changes in social work education

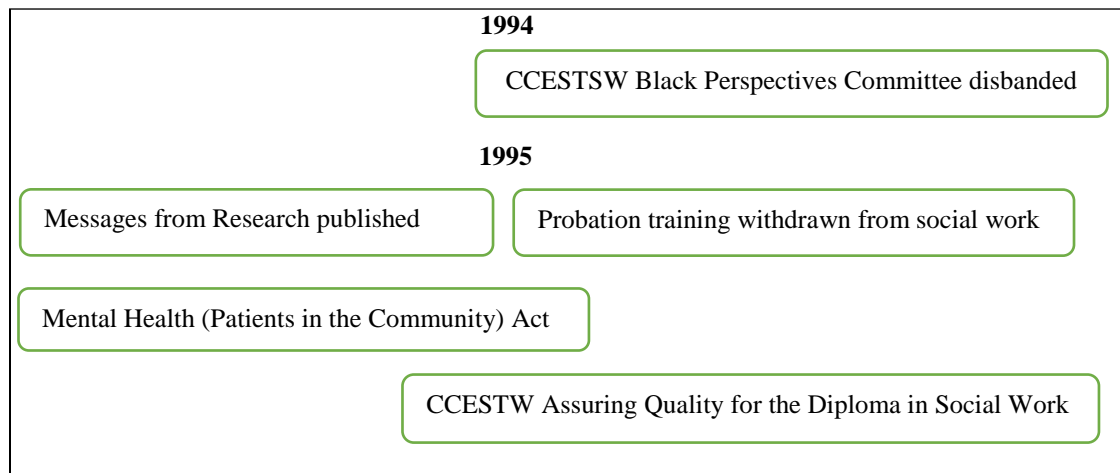
2.2.1 New Right Conservatism (1979-1997)

The term 'Winter of Discontent' was coined in 1979 to reflect the serious concerns about the state of British society towards the end of that decade. High rates of inflation, unemployment and a rash of strikes in crucial public services appeared to show the country as ungovernable. This exposed the then Labour government to serious criticisms for failing to reverse the country's economic decline and its inability to cope with the escalating crises in the country (Martin, 2009). Criticisms from the opposition about the cost of the welfare state and the promotion of welfare dependency were also significant contributing factors to the election of the Conservative Party in 1979, under Margaret Thatcher, who led the party until 1990. Her emphasis on individual responsibility, choice, freedom and the market replaced the post-war democratic consensus with neoliberal ideologies and ideas in Britain (Rogowski, 2013).

The timeline below illustrates key legislative, policy and relevant events during this period and the concurrent reforms instigated in social work education.

This and subsequent timelines in this chapter are adapted and modified from an original timeline developed by the University of Edinburgh (Socialwork.ed.ac.uk, 2018).

Historical Event	Year	Social Work Education
Election of Thatcher	1979	
Barclay Report	1982	
Mental Health Act	1983	Approved Social Worker training begins
Tyra Henry dies	1984	
Jasmine Beckford dies		
	1985	
A Child in Trust		CCETSW Policies for Qualifying Training in Social Work
	1986	
Kimberley Carlile dies		Disabled Persons Act
	1987	
Child death inquiries published		
	1988	
Cleveland Inquiry published		
	1989	
UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child		
Children Act passed		CCETSW Diploma in Social Work: Paper 30
	1990	
NHS and Community Care Act		CCETSW Requirements for Post-Qualifying Education and Training
Rochdale child abuse case and inquiry		Black Perspectives Committee set up
	1991	
Orkney child abuse case and inquiry		CCETSW Improving Standards in Practice



2.2.1.1 The roles and tasks of social work

The Barclay Report commissioned in 1980 by the Secretary of State in Thatcher's first government investigated the roles and tasks of social workers in England and Wales (Barclay Report, 1982). The report published in 1982 identified three key assumptions about the relationship between the state and its citizens: the 'safety-net approach' which advocated minimal state intervention and acknowledged the role of informal networks; the 'welfare state approach' akin to the post-war democratic consensus of the state providing comprehensive services to all citizens, and the 'community approach' which advocated devolution of powers to communities and that the role of social workers was to broker and develop these informal, supportive networks working collaboratively with informal carers and voluntary groups (Lymberly, 2005; Harris, 2008). While most committee members supported the community approach and emphasised the importance of more community engagement and community social work, Thatcher's cabinet largely ignored the recommendations. A minority report which stressed the statutory role of social work over a community-based approach was more influential at that time and argued that what was needed was not a change in the future direction of social work but a refinement in how it was organised (Pinker, 1982).

Retrospectively, this response to Barclay can be seen to exemplify the start of a concerted political trajectory taken by successive governments in shaping social workers as governmental employees, tasked with implementing its social policy and legislative change agendas. Considered from the present day, this increasing intervention of central government on how the profession of social work should be organised, what its primary roles and tasks should be, and what values it should hold, can be seen to have restricted a progressive vision

of the social work profession to emerge over the past forty years, outside of government political influence and control.

2.2.1.2 The political and public concern over social work

A series of child deaths in 1984 had huge ramifications for the profession. Tyra Henry was murdered by her father while in local authority care. The inquiry into Tyra's death claimed that the white social workers involved with her were too trusting of the family because they were Black. The inquiry into the death of Jasmine Beckford that same year was highly critical of the social workers focusing on the needs of the parents and not the child (Blom-Cooper, 1995). A private inquiry into the murder of Heidi Kosedá who was starved to death in a locked London flat, found that a senior inspector from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) had failed to investigate a complaint of child abuse made by a neighbour and lied about visiting the child. The following year witnessed the murder of Kimberley Carlile who was starved and beaten to death by her step-father. The inquiry found that her death was avoidable, and that key social work and health staff failed to apply the necessary skill, judgment and care in the case.

These tragic child deaths continued to raise serious concerns about the profession of social work, and child protection became a significant interest and concern for the media, the public and politicians of all political persuasions. Social workers were beginning to become more aware of the existence of child sexual abuse and these high-profile child deaths meant that social workers were too afraid to have accusations made against them of leaving children in potentially unsafe and abusive situations. This set the context for the Cleveland Child Sexual Abuse Scandal in 1987 where over 100 children were removed from 57 families and kept in hospital against parental wishes. Most of the children were eventually returned home, and proceedings dropped (Butler-Sloss, 1988). This further diminished the public and government trust in the profession, and the extensive media reporting of these high-profile cases was the impetus for significant policy changes in child protection in England in the early 1990s, which continued into the millennium following further high-profile child deaths. The portrayal of social workers in the media to the public during these times led significantly to the poor public image of the profession that it still is confronted with today:

Two quite contrary stereotypes of social workers were evident in the press. They were characterised as 'fools and wimps' and thereby failing to intervene authoritatively to protect children, but also as 'villains and bullies' particularly in relation to parents and carers. The two stereotypes sometimes existed at the same time (Parton, 2014, p.2048).

2.2.1.3 The review of social work education

The late 1980s witnessed concerns being voiced about the need to establish practice standards to ensure the competence of the workforce. The 1988 inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland in 1987, chaired by Baroness Butler-Sloss highlighted a crisis in the profession (Butler-Sloss, 1988). This led to a government-commissioned review of social work education and the introduction of a new professional qualification, the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW), first awarded in 1991 based on an agreed statement of knowledge, skills and values (CCETSW, 1991). Notably, this review of social work education, in hindsight, was the first attempt by the government to closer align universities with sector-wide employers through the introduction of the concept of 'partnership' in the delivery of programmes to national standards. Writers have commented that the DipSW reflected a shift towards a training paradigm in qualifying social work education relative to an educational one:

With the exception of its adherence to anti-racist and anti-discriminatory perspectives, it demonstrated the dominance of political and employer interests over professional interests (including those of social work academics)" (Lyons, 1999, p.15).

The introduction of this qualification was a significant change for social work education as knowledge, skills and values were explicitly specified to achieve competence in practice to a national minimum standard. The assessment of students' competence was based on specified practice outcomes at the point of qualification (NOS, 2002). The changes also required new programme proposals to be assessed by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work's (CCETSW) approved external advisors, and a requirement that any new proposals had to come from a partnership between universities and employers. CCETSW Paper 30 also heralded the pre-cursor to a regulatory regime of quality assuring social work programmes that grew in influence in successive years. Increasing regulation continues today with the recent introduction of a new social work regulator, Social Work England (DfE, 2018), which requires the approval of the Secretary for Education on its practice standards for social work. This arrangement will remove the previous autonomy of regulatory bodies by more closely tying social work and social work education regulation to the government.

Interestingly, the Black Perspectives Committee set up by CCETSW in 1990 to guide on how the anti-racist and anti-discriminatory requirements of Paper 30 could be met was disbanded by the Conservative government in 1994. This coincided with a government-led review of social work education which challenged the previous emphasis on social activism including challenging racism and oppression. The reforms to social work education in this

political period highlight the conservative government backlash against social workers' political correctness and a similar backlash on social work values in matters such as adoptive placements (Kirton, 2000). The new Diploma took a more general position towards oppression and discrimination in society. The CCETSW Assuring Quality for the Diploma in Social Work Report (CCETSW, 1995) which followed, emphasised the need for social work education to be based on practical, common sense principles and multiculturalism rather than anti-racism. This led to the introduction of a new Diploma in Social Work which required universities to offer programmes in partnership with employer agencies and the third sector.

The mid-1990s also saw the removal of probation from social work education and training in England and Wales, which retrospectively provides an example at the time of the pervasive workings of neoliberalism's impact on social work education during the rise of the political New Right (Cunningham, 2014). A prevailing paradigm of punishment pursued by the then Conservative government supplanted the previous rehabilitative goal in penal policy by a marked philosophical shift in how offending was to be understood. Criminal penal policy like the aptly-named 'Just Desserts' (Home Office, 2001) was informed by the underlying premise of placing the sole responsibility for offending on the individual, a major ideological shift from the previous account of social and psychological factors as legitimate considerations in the causation of crime (Teague, 2013). This change in the training of probation officers shifted the underlying ethos and role of the Probation Service significantly overnight, as a new punitive paradigm took hold and replaced the rehabilitative goal of the Service with one of punishment in the community. Clients that the Service previously aimed to 'advise assist and befriend' were now renamed offenders and the Service's new goal was to ensure the public's protection through the effective supervision of offenders in the community (Whitehead and Crawshaw, 2012).

2.2.1.4 Summary

In retrospect, the most significant effect of Barclay was not on the future direction of social work practice towards more community engagement as the following years were dominated by retrenchment in the personal social services brought about by Thatcher's government. What Barclay encapsulated at that time was the broader debate within the profession between those who advocated social work as a form of social action and those who held a narrower view of its role and function. Social action is understood as a form of social work practice that intends to change the traditional relationship between service users and social work

professionals. It aims to employ strategies of mobilization to bring about structural changes in the social system, or to prevent adverse changes from occurring (Zastrow, 2013).

These debates echoed earlier conflicts seen within the profession as far back as the Settlement Movement at the beginning of the 20th century (Lymberry, 2005, p.44) and re-surfaced later in 2007 when the General Social Care Council (GSCC) promoted a statement of social work roles and tasks for the 21st century through its 'Social Work at its best' review (GSCC, 2007) during the New Labour government. The GSCC statement stressed the need for more face-to-face engagement with clients and more collaborative working with other professionals. Ministers failed to publicly endorse the document; the incumbent Labour government of the day continued with the policies of the previous Conservative government in restricting and dictating the role and tasks of social work. The two recent contrasting reviews of social work education (Narey, 2014; Croisdale-Appleby, 2014) discussed later, are fundamentally premised on this same conflict seen at several critical junctures in the reform of social work education over the past four decades.

2.2.2 New Labour 1997-2010

In 1997, Tony Blair came to power as the British Labour Party won a landslide victory with successive wins in 2001 and 2005. New Labour refers to this period of government as it proposed a 'third way' in policy 'modernisation' and the 'new public management' as its key contributions (Powell, 2000). Blair's thinking of the 'third way' was influenced by sociologist Anthony Giddens who promoted a political positioning between Thatcherism and traditional socialism (Giddens, 1998). Thus, Blair abandoned the Labour Party's commitment to nationalising the means of production, loosed its ties with the trade unions and promoted pro-American, pro-minority and socially caring policies. The agenda of modernisation gave legitimacy to the practice of managerialism as the most effective mechanism for managing the delivery of social work services. New Labour also brought in more regulatory inspection regimes and apparatus including performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of services against principles of value for money. The timeline below illustrates key legislative, policy and historical events during this period and the concurrent reforms to social work education.

Historical Event	Year	Social Work Education
New Labour comes into power	1997	
Human Rights Act	1998	

Modernising Social Services published

Stephen Lawrence Inquiry published

1999

JM Consulting Review of DipSW

2000

Freedom of Information Act

Victoria Climbié dies

TOPSS Workforce Strategy published

2001

National Service Framework for Older People

Valuing People published

CCETSW abolished and replaced by GSCC

2002

DoH Requirements for Social Work Training published

2003

Laming Report into Climbié death published

Professional registration

Every Child Matters launched

National Institute for Social Work closes

2004

Children Act 2004

SWAN is launched

2007

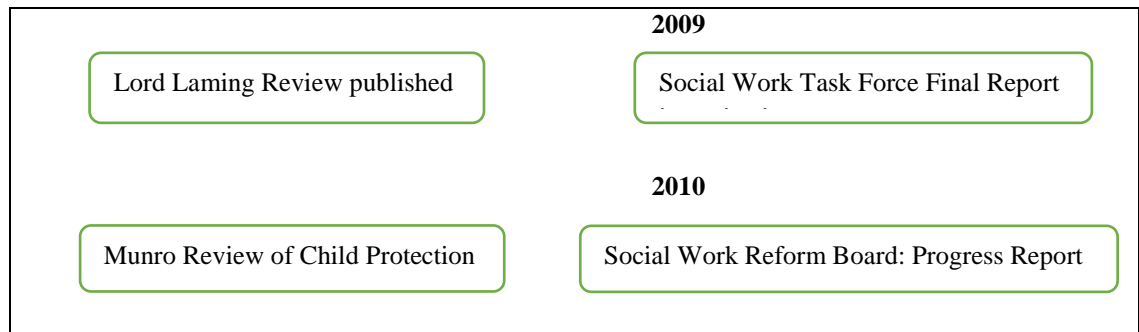
Global Financial Crisis

Social Work at its best published by GSCC

Peter Connelly dies

2008

Children and Young Persons Act



2.2.2.1 The modernisation and bureaucratisation of social work

In the late 1990s, New Labour's modernisation agenda for the public services profoundly re-shaped children and families social work and reflected increased bureaucratisation, managerialism and control of the social work task. The underpinning ideology of social work practice with families had swung during this period from preventive intervention to protectionism (Fox Harding, 1997). This shift meant that families would only receive services if their children were deemed to be at risk. Those children who experienced disability, mental health or were seeking asylum and refugee status in the UK particularly suffered under New Labour with the resourcing of adequate services (Brewer et al., 2007; Rogowski, 2010).

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, the distinctiveness of the social work profession became subsumed under the umbrella of 'social care' as CCETSW was replaced by a new regulatory body for the profession, the General Social Care Council (GSCC). This legislation also ushered in the registration of social workers and later social work students. It also tasked the GSCC with a mandate for the quality assurance of social work education providers. These changes in retrospect can be seen to have further restricted a progressive vision of social work to emerge. The dilution of social work's professional identity could also be seen in the introduction of Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) reflecting a decline of social work's influence in youth offending; social workers' presence became markedly absent from the Sure Start and Children's Fund initiatives (Muncie, 2006).

The tragic death of Victoria Climbié in 2000 resulted in the demise of social services departments and the beginning of the integration of health, education and social services. Lord Laming's inquiry into her death was highly critical of social work and the 'gross failure of the system' (Laming, 2003, p.6). The subsequent Children Act 2004 separated children's services from adults and placed these under the auspices of the Department for Education and Skills while adult services remained under the Department for Health. Following this

separation, these services began to be outsourced to private entities (Cunningham and James, 2009), further evidencing the continuing neoliberalisation of social work.

As with Thatcher, Blair's New Labour government further accelerated significant changes in social work education. In 2001, qualifying social work education was elevated to a minimum academic award level of an undergraduate degree and underpinned by a competency framework. This new BA in Social Work would be further replaced in 2012 by the current degree qualifications based around the Professional Capability Framework (BASW, 2016; 2018).

Further concerns about the adequacy of qualifying social work education arose after the death, by maltreatment, of a young child Peter Connelly in 2007 and the public and political backlash that ensued against the profession which was deemed to have failed him. In response to this public and political outrage, the government commissioned two reviews of the English child protection system, and both reported severe misgivings about the quality of specialist practice with children and families (Laming, 2009; Munro, 2012). The Social Work Task Force which preceded these reviews subsequently recommended a single reform programme for social work in England under the auspices of the Social Work Reform Board, reporting directly to ministers (SWRB, 2010; 2012). The setting up of a cross-party select committee questioned the variability in standards set for assessment of qualifying students (House of Commons, 2009).

The death of Peter Connelly in 2007 perhaps in retrospect can be seen ironically as an event that initiated some positives to emerge for social work. There was now an acknowledgement that practitioners spent too little time engaging with families as their time was taken up with undertaking bureaucratic functions like form filling and recording. The Social Work Task Force highlighted this finding which was subsequently taken up by the Social Work Reform Board and the Munro Review of Child Protection. Both reviews argued for less bureaucracy in children and families social work and more scope to be given for professional judgement of social workers. Looking back, by the end of 2010, the social work profession was fully assimilated into bureaucratic and proceduralist cultures of working and organisation.

Within this comprehensive reform agenda, a significant focus of the recommendations was directed towards qualifying education and the level of readiness for social work practice of new graduates (Moriarty et al., 2011; Devaney, Hayes and Spratt, 2017; Kinman, Grant and Webb, 2017). This issue again echoed earlier socio-political interest in the quality and rigour of qualifying social work education and the 'readiness' of NQSWs to enter professional practice, in the context of a challenging and unstable workforce environment (Bates et al.,

2010; Moriarty et al., 2011). These concerns remained unsatisfactorily resolved as Britain moved into the next decade and a new political era.

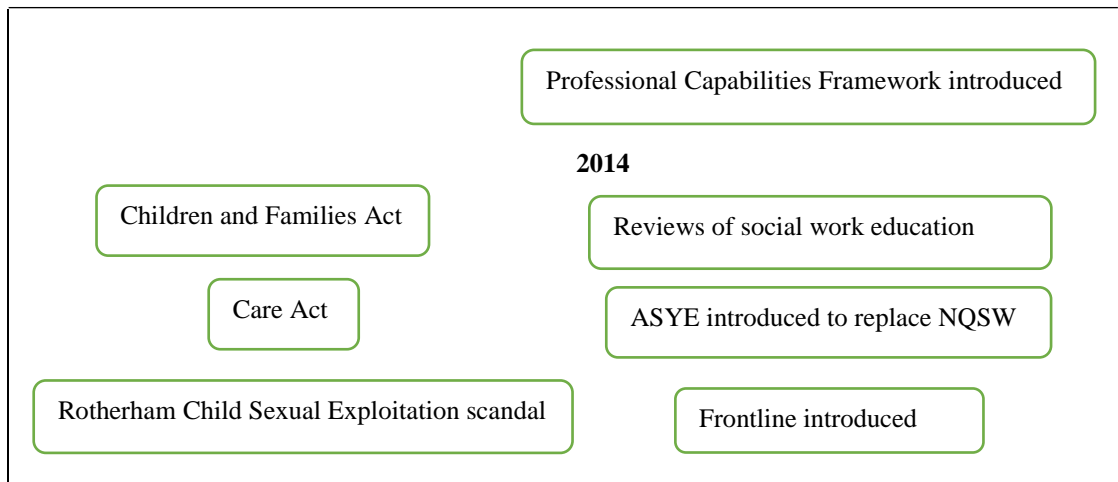
2.2.3 Coalition Government (Conservative-Liberal Democrat: 2010-2015)

In May 2010, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition took power and was faced with a tough fiscal climate following the global financial crisis that affected most major world economies in similar ways. While Labour's social policy programmes had delivered expanded public services, the Coalition decided to implement a programme of austerity as a way of 'tackling our record debts' (Pautz, 2018). Along with this economic policy imperative, it also aimed to deliver radical reforms to achieve 'a stronger society, a smaller state and responsibility in the hands of every citizen' (Cabinet Office, 2010, p.8). Despite a promise that the better off would carry a higher burden of austerity, the structural reforms implemented by the Coalition meant that the burden of austerity fell on the poorest in society, through changes to taxes and benefits. Cuts to early education, Sure Start and childcare were also drastically reduced (Nuffield Foundation, 2015).

Arguably the Coalition's most significant achievement in power was the introduction of the Care Act 2014 (CA, 2014). The Act ushered in the personalisation agenda based on giving choice and autonomy to the recipients of services. It was premised on allowing people to be at the centre of decision making about the services that they needed. It viewed the service user as a consumer exercising choice i.e. the state placing responsibility back on the individual to run their own lives (Harris, 2014). Dickens (2016) states that it underplays the realities of poverty and is based on individualistic, consumerist notions of choice.

The timeline overleaf illustrates key legislative, policy and relevant events during this period and concurrent reforms to social work education.

Historical Event	Year	Social Work Education
	2010	
Coalition Government		
Austerity Deficit Reduction Plan		StepUp to Social Work introduced
A Vision for Adult Social Care		
	2012	
Welfare Reform Act passed		GSCC abolished and replaced by HCPC
		HCPC re-approval of social work courses



2.2.3.1 The continuing reform of social work education

The reforms of social work during the Coalition period included attempts to provide leadership to the profession through the appointment of Chief Social Workers. The identification of core capabilities for social workers, responding to the support needs of NQSWs through the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) programme and developing practice and professionalism through the College of Social Work (now disbanded) were welcomed initiatives.

Attempts to reform qualifying social work education, on the other hand, has been much more controversial and contested as demonstrated in two major competing reviews of social work education undertaken by Malcolm Narey and David Croisdale-Appleby. The two separate and conflicting reviews of social work education in 2014 for the Department for Education (Narey, 2014) and the Department of Health (Croisdale-Appleby, 2014) highlight the continued controversy that surrounds the policy area of social work qualification. Underlying these debates is a much more explicit assertion that graduates from traditional university-based social work programmes are not 'fit for purpose' and that they do not have the appropriate skills required to be job ready (Devaney, Hayes and Spratt, 2017). As discussed previously this has been raised on numerous occasions in the past as a core criticism of social work education.

The joint statement by the Association of Professors of Social Work (APSW) on these reviews of education (APSW and JUCSWEC, 2014) reiterated the view of Universities UK on the policy incoherence of commissioning two separate reviews of social work at the same time by two different government departments. APSW stressed the need to locate the reviews of social work education as one component within a broader review of placement quality, the retention of staff and their on-going professional development needs. APSW raised

concerns about the narrowness of Narey's proposals and that both reports pointed towards a direction of postgraduate study for social work, thus risking the future development of undergraduate courses within universities or even their removal. This trajectory if pursued threatens the overall stability and future of university social work departments.

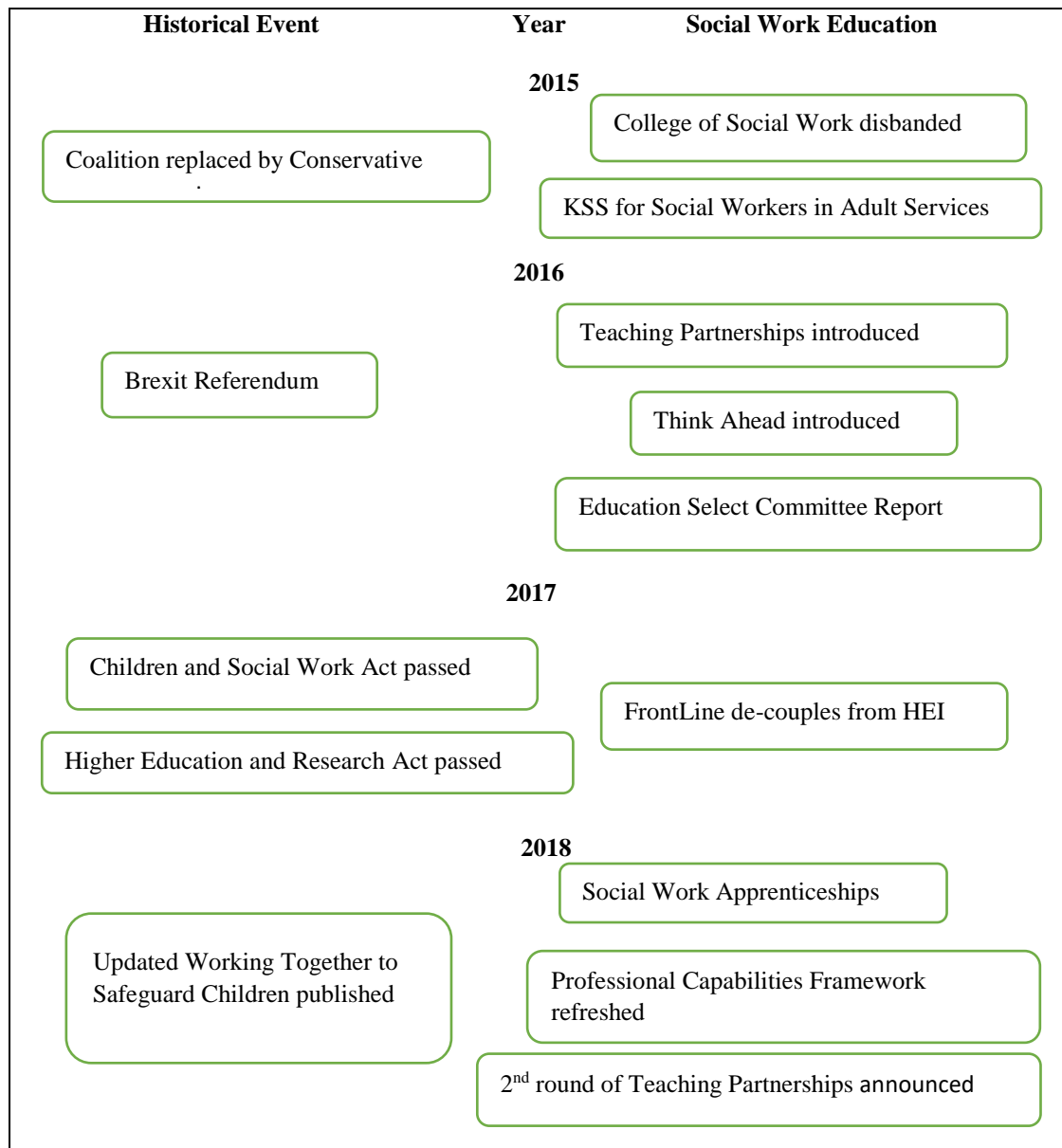
The views of academics, professionals, service users and students on the current reforms to social work education are set out in a study by Higgins et al. (2014). The study ($n=48$), a qualitative case study of a social work degree programme in England collected data at two different points employing interviews and focus groups. It found that there was a central struggle in the reform discourse between the global definition of social work (IFSW, 2014) and its alignment to social justice and ethical principles and the narrower functionary role set out in the Narey report (2014). Social work education is located centrally in this conflict and linked to a broader debate within the literature about the social work profession as a whole.

The Education Select Committee in 2016 voiced serious concern about the pace of reform within the profession and whether the earlier reforms had been provided with sufficient time to embed themselves (Parliament. Education Select Committee, 2016). The Committee was critical of the closure of the College of Social Work and moves to change the regulatory framework again. The Committee highlighted 'the distinct lack of collaboration with the sector' (p.3), and that reforms were being replaced before they had an opportunity to settle. It highlighted the different agendas of the Department of Health and the Department for Education and stated that they were pulling in two contradictory directions. The Committee highlighted the lack of focus on the reforms on the 'endemic retention problems' (Webb and Carpenter, 2012). It also noted that the new modes of delivery of qualifying education like Frontline had not yet provided any evidence that they were better than traditional routes. The Committee also expressed its concerns about these new modes of delivery shifting away from their relationship with the higher education sector. What was notable about this Select Committee report is the explicit voicing of severe criticisms of the government's reform agenda by its ministers: six of the eleven members constituting the Committee were former conservative ministers.

2.2.4 Conservative Government (2015: present)

The current Conservative government elected in 2015 faces many issues including child poverty, unaffordable housing, pressures on the NHS, an ageing population and an unbalanced economy. The country continues to face difficult fiscal conditions with continuing high public-sector debt and a high deficit. The timeline below illustrates key

legislative, policy and relevant events during this period to the present day, and the concurrent reforms to social work education that continue today.



2.2.4.1 The new reform agenda: the transformation of social work

Recently two key policy drivers; the Children and Social Care Act 2017 (CSCA, 2017) and the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA, 2017) have been introduced that will collectively continue the reshaping of children and families social work and more critically question whether the university sphere continues to be the legitimate site of location for social work education. This radical re-defining of the role and purpose of social work and social work education has been shown to have its antecedents in earlier reforms of social

work dating back some forty years and now framed within the government's transformation of social work agenda (DfE, 2016) and recent changes to higher education.

In 2015, the Department for Education published the Knowledge and Skills Statement for the Approved Child and Family Practitioner status of a social worker. Soon after a similar statement for Adults Social Worker status emerged (Department of Health, 2015). These statements, prepared by the Chief Social Workers after broad consultation, outline what social workers in England need to know and be able to do at the end of their first year in practice and are intended to inform what is taught on qualifying education programmes to adequately equip future social workers. This change is a further attempt at addressing the long-standing issue of explicitly defining the roles and tasks of social workers, contested since the late 1970s.

A KPMG-led consortium was appointed in 2015 to work closely with the Chief Social Worker to design and test a system of accreditation for children's social workers (Trowler, 2015) to enforce this service delivery-orientated curriculum both in social work education and social work practice. Alongside the running of pilots, this proposal concluded its consultation in March 2017 and is set to introduce a range of statutory social work duties that ministers believe should require accreditation. The government aims to have all children's social workers accredited by 2020, and it sees this assessment mechanism as crucial to the development of effective social workers and the restoration of public confidence in the profession.

Concurrent to these on-going developments, the introduction of Teaching Partnerships across England has required educators to collaborate more closely with employers in determining a new social work curriculum (DfE, 2016, 2018). Such moves for closer collaboration between educators and employers can retrospectively be seen to have existed historically in the reforms of social work education. While there seems to be a general acceptance of these collaborative arrangements from educators, what is less clear is the level of alignment in the curriculum to the government direction of prescribing a narrow focus on specialisation in skills for practice. This alignment, supported by employers leaves educators in a very invidious position: on the one hand, it forces compliance with a new emerging paradigm of social work based on service delivery imperatives and on the other, it renders a lack of engagement with these developments as risking the de-stabilising of its social work programmes.

2.3 The hegemonic status of neoliberalism

Looking back over the changing political eras in England since the late 1970s, what is clear is the hegemonic status that neoliberalism has achieved in its influence on the shaping of social work and social work education. Thatcher's government ushered in the neoliberal age to British society and New Labour's symbiotic relationship with the New Right continued the transformation of social work through a bricolage of neoliberal governmentality (Gulson, 2007) which continues today under the current Conservative government. Bricolage as a concept (Levi-Strauss, 1962) is useful to envision how the key events highlighted during the major political eras since the late 1970s were reframed and decontextualized with underlying neoliberal ideas to communicate new meanings and practices to the public and the social work profession. For example, the neoliberal ideologies of individualism and commodification replaced the earlier presumptions about the role of the state and social work in promoting peoples' welfare by fundamentally acting to restrict liberal traditions of a social work profession to emerge. In the present neoliberal political environment, service users are reconstructed as individuals 'who are unable or unwilling to take responsibility for their own moral rehabilitation' (Hyslop, 2016). This premise of how individuals are to be seen and thus, the purpose of social work defined, remains at the heart of the current conflicts in the reform of social work education; a narrow statutory view of the role and function of social work competing against the advocating of social work as a form of social action. The concept of bricolage can also be applied to show how child death tragedies were politicised and utilised by both the Conservative and New Labour governments to frame the discourse on the inadequacies of social work education and the needs for reform. The edifice of neoliberalism communicated critical messages throughout this period about the need for government intervention, resulting in the implementation of a churn of legislative and social policy changes and radical reforms of social work education during the 1980's to the present day.

2.3.1 Neoliberalism's key propositions

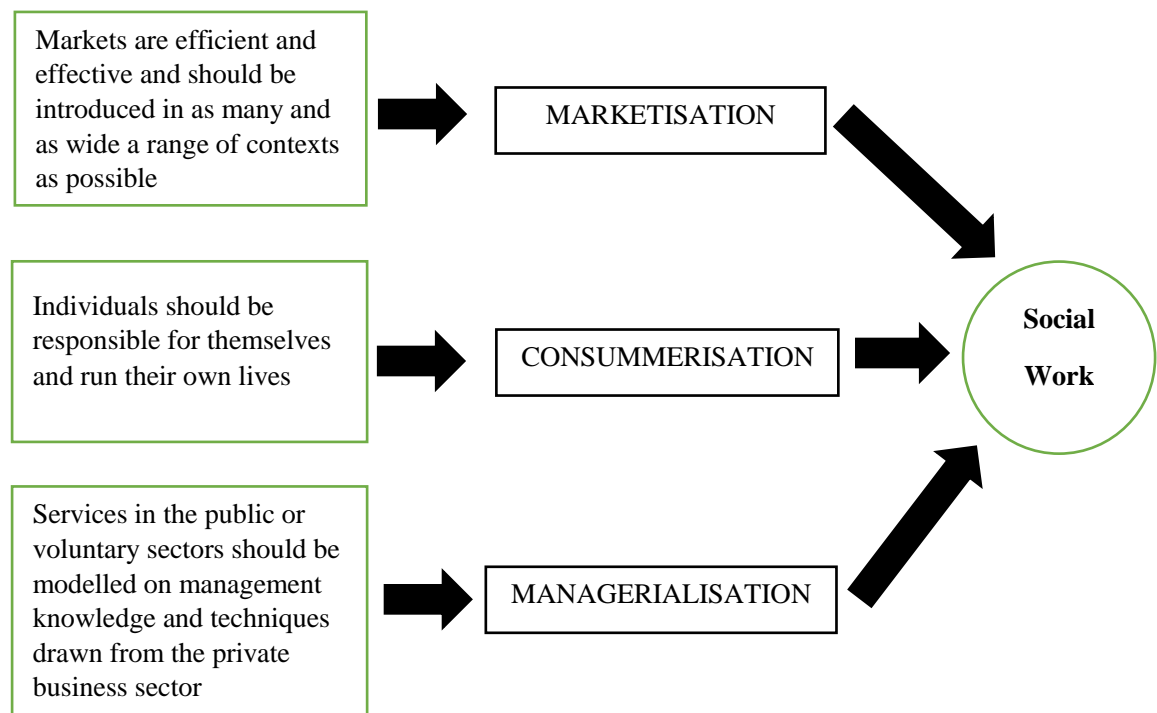
Harris (2014) presents a conceptual framework to identify the manifestation of key processes of neoliberalism's impact on social welfare regimes. He highlights three key propositions that are played out concerning the influence of neoliberalism on social work in different global contexts regardless of the political persuasions of government:

- The premise that the market is the most efficient and effective and should be introduced in a broad range of contexts as wide as possible.

- Individuals should hold responsibility for their own lives and therefore not rely on the state to run their affairs.
- Public and voluntary sector services should adopt management knowledge and techniques from the private sector.

He continues that in relation to social work, neoliberal thought and processes can be identified in three processes that correspond to these three propositions: marketisation, consumerisation and managerialism (Harris, 2014, p.8). This conceptual framework allows for the identification of the pervasive workings of neoliberalism in how it has shaped the profession of social work over the past forty years and continued to do so today. This framework is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Propositions and processes (taken from Harris, 2014, p.9)



2.3.1.1 Marketisation

The privatisation and marketisation of social care which commenced in the late 1970s is continuing to take an increasingly larger share of the delivery of social care services leading to the commodification of social care for profit (Scourfield, 2008) with private companies like G4S and Serco expanding into children's social services (Jones, 2015). This privatisation agenda was set by the governments of Thatcher in the 1980s and was continued by Blair's 'New Labour' government over the next two decades into the early 2000s. New Labour introduced the private finance initiative (PFI) to raise private capital funding for public

services, school academies and NHS foundation trusts. One key strand of Blair's policy to make public services attractive to the marketplace and privatisation was to remove regulatory requirements. Following New Labour and the Coalition, the current Conservative government has continued with opening public services like probation, utilities, social care, welfare benefits and health services to the marketplace (Meek, 2014).

In relation to social work education, the further marketisation of higher education through the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA, 2017) opens opportunities for multi-national private providers of education with degree-awarding powers to potentially compete with traditional social work education provision. Along with the creation of a new regulatory framework for higher education and the creation of the Office for Students, the Act aims to increase competition and student choice to ensure that students receive value for money. This exemplifies how consumerist thinking is now embedded in both the education and social care sectors. These changes are likely to demand that social work education programmes further operate and compete within a culture of marketisation. A recent study considered the impact of this marketisation and neoliberal environment on the nature and quality of social work education by seeking the views of social work academics (Cleary, 2018). It found that academics were becoming increasingly concerned about the changing nature of academic-student relationships because of the influence of market forces and fee-based funding. They also voiced concerns about the pressures on admissions and academic decision-making about failing students, whereby respondents felt implicit pressures to lower standards of assessment to increase student performance outcomes. Many reported that they felt caught between the competing agendas of universities, government and the needs of the profession. Indeed, newer qualifying routes like Frontline, Step Up and Think Ahead are challenging the primary location of social work education. The recent de-coupling of Frontline from its previous collaborative arrangements with a higher education partner perhaps is an early indication of a shift away from university-based social work education towards private provision. It is not unforeseeable that entities like Frontline may utilise the provisions in the recent Higher Education and Research Act (2017) to gain degree-awarding powers themselves. The government's backing of the development of a new framework for the provision of social work education may reflect a broader shift away from the education of social workers towards the training of them as seen in previous reforms. There seems little understanding by the government of the need to educate social workers to engage more critically with the role and complexity of social work practice- a stance emphasised by the universities.

2.3.1.2 Consumerisation

Along with this overarching policy framework for higher education, the transformation of social work agenda, heralded by the Children and Social Care Act (2017), Care Act (2014) and the strategic statement for social work with adults, poses many emerging challenges for social work practice and social work education. These policy changes focus on strengthening regulation by the establishment of a new single regulatory body for social work, Social Work England. This body is likely to set new practice standards, informed by the Chief Social Workers' Key Skills Statements and then apply these as the benchmarks to accredit all social work programmes, implicitly prescribing the social work curriculum. These changes build on the Croisdale-Appleby, and Neary reports on social work education which also represents significant milestones in these transformations.

While the current developments of the transformation agenda are part of a broader policy strategy by the Chief Social Workers to 'change practice and the practice system' (Trowler, 2017 p.200), social work educators have perhaps themselves become complicit in the current narrow reshaping of the social work profession. Social work education is caught between the conflicting demands and expectations of university funding systems and employer-based expectations. In contrast, the imposition of regulation and the diversification of routes to qualification may have acted to side-line the Academy. As matters stand, employers have unprecedented influence over dictating the social work curriculum, aligning this with their service delivery mandates. Again, this has a long tradition since the late 1970s as outlined earlier. The alignment of the government with employer perspectives runs the risk of fragmenting and de-intellectualising the profession (Croisdale- Appleby, 2014).

The establishment of the 'What Works Centre' as part of the transformation agenda aims to promote evidence-based practice so that social workers have more opportunity to develop research-informed practice. However, this initiative is not without its critics particularly over the lack of an existing evidence base for social work, the nature of evidence and how it is to be utilised (Jones, 2017). This criticism is problematic as social work authors such as Sheldon and MacDonald (2009) would strongly assert that a comprehensive evidence base already exists for social work. Nevertheless, the main contention by critics of evidence-based practice is that it emphasises a medical model of defining service users' problems rather than these being socially defined (Webb, 2001).

The impact of neoliberal ideologies and ideas on social work since the late 1970s has created a shift in the ideological and philosophical mind-set within the profession concerning the understandings of the causation of individual problems and difficulties. It has moved away

from sociological and structural understandings of social problems (Mullaly, 2006) to one which more readily provides explanations within the individual psychological and pathological domains; reflecting a return to the origins of the profession and its close relationship with the medical profession (Bywaters, 1986). This shift in mind-set on how social problems are understood results in a consequent change in how service users are perceived and consequently how social workers relate to them. This inscribed mind-set of neoliberal individualism assumes a self as an autonomous agent, able to exercise choice and be responsible for that choice; building a personal capacity for self-provision (McAvoy, 2015). Thus, social issues and social problems are considered more as deficits of the service user's ability to manage and professional responses and interventions to those deficits are seen as needing to be borne by that individual and the network of supports that may exist around them, rather than on a reliance on the state. This represents an ideological shift in the understanding of social work and social problems it aims to address and has occurred and accelerated within the context of reducing resources in meeting need and the reducing role of the welfare state. In contrast, Carey's study of the use of ideology by a group of care managers in England ($n=44$) found that legislation and policy were the key external factors in managers thinking. Although he also found that there was evidence of the application of professional and critical ideologies which had the potential to act as a resistance against the dominance of neoliberal ideologies within care management (Carey, 2008).

2.3.1.3 Managerialism

During the past 40 years, neoliberalism has re-shaped social work towards a techno-rational activity driven by managerialism and proceduralisation which privileges economic concerns over need (Harris, 2003). On the front-line, this is manifested by social workers spending more time completing paperwork rather than engaging with service users and assuming the role of gatekeepers in administering limited resources to meet human need. The increasing managerial control of practice and the workforce through regulation (Carey, 2008a) has acted to promote a techno-rational form of practice and diminished the autonomy and discretion of practitioners. It has also marginalised the emotional dimensions of work with service users rather than emphasising the relational and emotional aspects of practice (Ruch, Turney and Ward, 2010; White, Morris and Featherstone, 2014). Munro has also highlighted the development of 'cultures of compliance' within social work organisations which constrain reflective practice and meaningful engagement with service users (Munro, 2011). The increasing bureaucracy, proceduralisation, and centrally driven targets have led to a growing fragmentation of practice and a concerning despondency among practitioners. (Ife, 1997; Jones, 2001; Lymberly and Butler, 2004; Wilson, 2010; Harris, 2014). While managerialism

defines the nature of contemporary practice, the current status of social work is the result of successive political governments since the late 1970s embracing the emergence of neoliberalism in social work proactively through policy developments, organisational restructuring and reforms of social work and social work education. These interventions have simultaneously actively restricted and limited a progressive and alternative vision of social work to be formulated.

While neoliberalism now sits firmly as a dominant discourse in the social work workplace through the managerialism and proceduralisation of practice, it has also become so indelibly inscribed into the consciousness of social workers and their managers that neoliberal social work is seen by many as the only identifiable form of social work in England (Harris, 2013). Recent research by Morris (2017) into social work interventions and poverty certainly supports this ideological re-positioning. Her study involved in-depth fieldwork with social workers and managers in six councils and revealed that poverty and its consequences were no longer seen as the 'core business for children's social workers in England. Instead, a focus on risk dominated and practitioners felt 'so overwhelmed' by the wider issues facing families that they focused on individual harms detached from their wider causes. While this may appear alarming, some would still argue that there is evidence that social workers have never been concerned with eradicating poverty as first highlighted in Joel Handler's 'The Coercive Social Worker' in 1943 (Harris, 2002).

2.4 Conclusion

The current reforms to social work and social work education in England span the previous Conservative government under Thatcher, New Labour (Social Work Task Force 2009a; 2009b), the Coalition government (Social Work Reform Board 2010, Munro 2011, Social Work Reform Board 2012) and the present Conservative government through its transformation agenda (DfE, 2017). What is common within these reforms is an attempt to ameliorate the political and public concerns about the social work profession by focusing on enhancing the quality of the workforce. What is also evident through a historical analysis of the reforms to social work education is the marginalisation of voices of disagreement with the views of successive governments. This is seen as far back as the response to the Barclay Report in 1982, the GSCC review of task and roles in 2007, the disbanding of the College of Social Work in 2015, and the Education Select Committee concerns in 2016 about the pace of reform.

The intrusive intervention of central government in social work education over time, which has continued with the two recent reviews of education, has led to a resurfacing of the

dichotomous nature of social work (IFSW, 2010). The two competing conceptualisations; one aligned to the global definition of social work (IFSW, 2014) and the other espoused by government and employers, which exposes the very nature, role and purpose of social work and opens it up to be contested. As proposed by Price and Simpson (2007), the historical contradictions and tensions that have laid dormant at the heart of social work are now re-surfacing, and once again there is a question about whether social work is primarily concerned with social reform, social control or social care (Howe, 2009).

2.5 The role of emotion in social work

2.5.1 The centrality of emotion and affect in social work

Shouse (2005) makes a useful distinction between feelings, emotions and affect: feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*. He defines feelings as sensations which individuals evaluate against previous experiences and then label these. They are personal and biographical as individuals have a distinct set of past sensations from which to draw when interpreting and labelling their feelings. Emotion is defined as the projection or display of a feeling whether real or feigned, and it is an expression of an individual's internal state, or at times contrived to fulfil social expectations (Shouse, 2005, p.6). Affect is perhaps best defined in the literature by Wetherell as 'embodied meaning-making', adding that 'mostly this will be something that could be understood as human emotion' (2012, p.4). It is considered an individual response, 'a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another' (Massumi, 2002).

Feelings, emotions and affect play a significant role in human life, and the level of their importance in social work has varied over time, depending on the dominant theorisations of the day of service users' experiences and circumstances. The importance of their role has been reflected in the approaches to social work practice that have subsequently emerged. At present the significant role of emotion and affect features in the renewed interest in relationship-based approaches to practice and, importantly, in understanding the impact of stress and burnout on early career practitioners (Collins, 2008; Collins, Coffey and Morris, 2010; Grant, 2013) and in terms of effective professional practice with service users (Howe, 2008).

The modern social work profession has its roots in the medical profession at the start of the 20th century (Lymberry, 2005) and social work practice development with its close relationship with Freudian psychoanalytical theory in the 1920s and the later development of psychodynamic theories by Jung (1964), Erikson (1950) and Adler (1927).

Psychodynamic theories pay close attention to the emotions, thoughts and motivations of the individual on conscious levels while taking account of unconscious dynamics and processes (Meltzer, 1983; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). Erickson's development of psychosocial theory expanded these ideas further by acknowledging the ways that individuals are also shaped by and react to their social environment through his theory of psychosocial development across the lifespan (Erickson, 1970). The foundations of psychodynamic practice require an openness of the social worker to the emotional experience of the service user, which leads on to the need for the social worker to be open to their own emotional experience. This then highlights the importance of the social worker being able to differentiate between their personal experience and those of other people (Cooper, 2010).

Psychodynamic and psychosocial-informed casework was a major form of social work practice until the 1970s when criticisms from 'radical' social workers challenged this dominance for ignoring the impact of social inequalities and the impoverished life circumstances of service users (Bailey and Brake, 1976; Corrigan and Leonard, 1978). New theorisations of individual functioning and wellbeing emerged independently, particularly derived from systems theories (von Bertalanffy, 1968) and the understandings of ecological and biological systems in society and their relation to individuals' experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Germain, 1991). While these 'new' practice perspectives challenged the dominance of psychodynamic casework, what remained paramount in these newer concepts of understanding the 'person-in-environment' was a focus on the individual's ability to develop relationships and attachments (Friedman and Allen in Brandell, 2014). Thus, the social work practice models and approaches that emerged, for example, the systemic framework for social work (Pincas and Minahan, 1973), task-centred working, cognitive-behavioural social work approaches, while rooted in different and competing theoretical traditions maintained an emphasis on understanding the role of emotion and affect. This was achieved by stressing the relationship and the relational between the social worker, the service user and their environment.

Within this psychosocial tradition, Parton argues that the centrality of relationship and relations, mainly advocated through the writings of Winnicott (1958; 1965) and Bowlby (1973), provided a dominant 'theoretical orientation' to the development of social work in the UK (Parton, 2008, p. 257). The importance of relationship is further emphasised in the seminal text by Coulshed:

While it is true that people do not come to social work looking for relationship, and while it is no substitute for practical support, nevertheless social workers are

one of the few groups who recognise the value of relating to others in a way which recognises their experience as fundamental to understanding action (Coulshed, 1991, p.2).

Lishman (2009) also argues that a key aspect of the nature of social work is the centrality of the relationship between the social worker and service user. This is particularly important given that social workers today regularly deal with situations within a heightened emotional context and thus need to respond accordingly to the issues that arise. Howe (2009) asserts that 'emotions define the social work relationship' (p.1), and many other writers agree on the importance of facilitating a 'working alliance' with service users as fundamental to social work practice (Biestek, 1961; Howe, 1997; Ruch, Turney and Ward, 2010; White, Morris and Featherstone, 2014).

The current interest in relationship-based approaches in social work (Ruch, Turney & Ward, 2018) albeit within an increasing proceduralist and managerialist practice context, again aim to explicitly re-assert the importance and centrality of emotion in understanding human experience and the importance of relationship. Research by Duncan and Hubble (1997) certainly supports the importance of relationship or the 'working alliance'. Their study aimed to define the factors common to the effectiveness of all therapeutic interventions and found that the quality of the working relationship between therapist and client accounted for 30% in the variance of the successful outcome. Alongside this, the worker's expression of hopefulness accounted for 15% variance and the largest contribution was the client's strengths which amounted to 40% variance in the successful outcome of the therapeutic intervention.

Howe (2003) explored the views of clients on their experience of the psychotherapeutic process by conducting a longitudinal study of social work casework over a 60-year period to identify the components of effective outcomes. He found that despite the adoption of a preferred theoretical orientation by the therapist, clients expressed similar sentiments in that what they valued was a secure trusting environment, empathy and warmth.

What is known is that the greater the trust and safety social workers can provide to service users, the more likely they are to come to terms with their situation and work towards changing this. Understanding the inter-related workings and conflicts of internal and external motivations on human behaviour allows social workers to understand human experience more holistically. Morrison (2007) argues that competent social workers can connect cognition with affect and skilful behaviour and that the inter-relation of these three domains is central to effective social work practice. He also argues that an understanding and

management of one's own and others' emotions is a critical consideration at every stage of the social work process (Morrison, 2007).

The Munro Review of Child Protection (Munro, 2011) also highlighted that the interaction of the relationship between the social worker and service user was an essential element in how information was gathered, and that this relationship needed to be understood within the emotional context of the interaction. Social workers need to be emotionally aware of their emotional responses to situations and have the capacity to direct the service user to the emotional aspects of their situation and contain the feelings that arise.

Misca and Unwin (2017) argue that neoliberalism has displaced psychological perspectives in contemporary social work. They advocate for the re-assertion of these perspectives so that psychodynamic and psychosocial understandings continue to be influential in shaping our understanding and development of a form of emotional social work practice. Within this, emotional insight is an underlying principle of psychodynamic and psychosocial perspectives in social work. Emotional intelligence as a working definition is perhaps best described by Mayer et al as:

the capacity to reason about emotions, and of emotions to enhance thinking. It includes the abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth, (Mayer et al, 2004, p. 197).

These theoretical orientations, deriving from psychoanalytic theory, have a well-established history in influencing and shaping the development of practice methods and approaches in the social work profession (Goldstein, 2002). Goldstein points to the need for emotional awareness and intelligence beyond the individual social worker and that those who manage social workers need to have skills in emotional intelligence in their work with social workers and within the broader organisational context. According to Morrison (2007) the importance of relationships and their emotional context, also 'extends beyond practitioner-user interactions, to working with other colleagues, disciplines and systems' (p. 249).

2.5.2 The increasing emotional intensity of front-line social work practice

While there is considerable international literature on stress in social work, it is primarily focused on the links with the workload, the experiences of burnout and compassion fatigue (Acker 2004, Tam and Mong 2005, Mänttari-van der Kuip 2014). UK studies are limited and based on representative samples of social workers (Huxley et al. 2005, Evans et al. 2006,

Hudson and Webber 2012; Wilberforce et al., 2014; Carpenter et al. 2015) and social care staff (Coffey, Dudgill and Tattershall, 2004).

The term 'burnout' while difficult to define precisely is normally used to describe the consequences of severe stress and high ideals in the helping professions (Freudenberger and Richelson, 1980; Maslach and Jackson, 1981). Stress in the workplace is described as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them at work' (Weinberg and Murphy, 2013). The stages of burnout have been identified as enthusiasm, stagnation, frustration and apathy (Edelwich and Brodsky, 1980). Compassion fatigue is closely related to 'vicarious traumatisation' (Figley, 1995), or secondary stress, that arises from the exposure of professionals working with individuals who have experienced traumatic events. It can co-exist with burnout and can be cumulative in effect, i.e. it can specifically originate from working with one service user or with several over a period (American Institute of Stress, 2017). In the current changing context of social work, a lack of congruence between personal feelings and professional values has the propensity to lead to 'self-alienation, emotional depletion and burnout' (Grant and Kinman, 2014, p. 41). Both burnout and compassion fatigue have common symptomology which includes emotional and mental exhaustion, decreasing interactions with individuals towards isolation, depersonalisation through disconnection with real events and physical exhaustion (Adams, Boscarino and Figley, 2006). Given the deleterious consequences, the higher levels of burnout reported amongst the occupational group of social workers compared with other allied professions (Lloyd et al. 2002; Rose, 2003; Collins, 2008) is deeply alarming.

It is recognised that child protection social workers are more prone to the consequences of exposure to high rates of stress and burnout, which is creating concerns over the retention of experienced staff within this key field of practice (Regehr et al., 2004; Healy, 2009; Laming, 2009). Studies also highlight that while burnout can exist in any occupational group, the unique factors that impinge on social workers of poor working conditions, high workloads and the ineffectiveness of bureaucratic organisations and structures play a significant part in causation (Anderson, Coffey and Byerly, 2002; Tham and Meagher, 2009; Hussein et al., 2014). However, some studies highlight that against this backdrop of stress and burnout, a substantial proportion of child protection social workers manage the pressures of the work and function at a high degree of performance and report satisfaction in their job role (Nordick, 2002; Ellett, 2009).

It could be argued that social workers need to be able to cope with the emotional demands of the work and they should expect to be exposed to the full range of human pain and grief,

and in certain circumstances, work with the devastating effects of abuse on service users. However, what compounds these experiences is the uncertainty of being criticised for the natural consequences arising from the uncertainties of social work practice (Dwyer, 2007). Smith (2005) argues that one's emotional feeling and fears of distress are primarily unacknowledged in the profession and can arise unexpectedly as irrational responses to one's own past experiences and these powerful feelings may be repressed due to the fear of sharing these with others. This would suggest that workers need to be provided with a facilitating organisational culture that allows for the expression of emotion and time to process powerful experiences and the impacts of this (Senge, 1990; Ballat and Campling, 2011). The marginalisation of emotion in the workplace does not appear to allow emotion as a valid component of professional practice.

Bureaucratic organisations do not eliminate emotion. They do emotion work, or rather, through structures, processes, procedures, rules and regulations, they do the work of assisting participants in distorting, manipulating, redirecting and neutralizing emotion.
(Rogers, 2001, p.185).

Munro's review of child protection (Munro 2011) highlights the relationship between the emotional intensity of child protection work and the psychological impact on front-line workers. She emphasises that a lack of emotional efficacy and consideration has the potential to lead to poor decision-making and reasoning due to a worker's lack of insight into the unconscious influences on interpretation and distorted reality-making. She also warns against the harmful effects of emotional exposure and risks of burnout within this work environment if workers are not adequately supported.

Howe (2008) has also observed the detrimental effects of the emotional dimensions of working with children and families, where social workers are not supported or do not have access to mechanisms that enable them to express the emotional impacts of the work. These impacts can have consequences both for the mental and physical health of social workers and can include, what is generally termed, 'compassion fatigue' (Adams, Boscarino and Figley, 2006) and disruptions in cognitive schema, mainly where social workers are engaged in work with victims of serious abuse (Cunningham 2001).

Ferguson's recent research (2017) on observing the daily interactions of social workers with children and families revealed feelings of unbearable levels of anxiety associated with the overwhelming emotional intensity of their interactions with angry and resistant families and their friends. He also found that these experiences were associated with the organisational cultures within which they worked and the degrees of support available. A major study by

Smith et al. (2017) of the child protection systems across the English- speaking world found these systems as overly procedural and compliance- based. This had resulted in constrained and hostile relationships between social workers and families, and social workers felt compromised in meeting the emotional needs of families due to the competing demands of a neoliberal state.

The incidence of stress in social work may also be linked to the rapid demographic changes that are presently taking place in society. This is resulting in social workers today being presented with considerable emerging social issues of trafficking, child sexual exploitation, asylum, migration and forced labour. This 'internationalisation' of social problems, linked to globalisation, means that social work practitioners today deal with a more substantial burden of risk as part of their caseloads (Khan and Dominelli, 2008). This is particularly pronounced in statutory children and families social work where there has also been a major re-orientation over the past decade from early intervention approaches and practices with families towards an increasingly safeguarding and protectionist mode of practice (Lonne et al., 2009). This re-orientation in focus and approach has had consequences for service users who report social work interventions as de-humanising and distressing (Jackson et al., 2016), further compounding social workers experiences of burnout and compassion fatigue (McFadden, Campbell and Taylor (2015). The increasing management of risk as part of typical caseloads is exposing social workers to an increased emotional intensity where feelings of fear, anxiety and other heightened emotional states are prevalent as everyday work experiences (Ferguson, 2017).

Work-related stress impacts on social workers' mental health and wellbeing and can also have unintended consequences for service users due to impaired work performance, strained relationships and sickness absence (Wright and Cropanzano, 1998; Horder, 1999; Morris, 2005; Nissy et al., 2005). High levels of stress also pose significant implications for the retention of social work staff (LGA 2009) and account for the shorter time NQSWs remain in the profession, when compared to other allied occupations (Curtis, Moriaty and Netten 2009). Studies also highlight stress as the primary, self-identified factor in burnout and contributor to staff leaving the profession (LGA, 2009). The perception of social work as being a highly stressful job is contributing, along with the realities of front-line practice, to the current recruitment problems within the profession with applications to undergraduate programmes falling for the fourth consecutive year (Community Care, 2017).

2.5.3 Emotional resilience: an innate characteristic or interactional process?

Resilience is defined as the 'ability to bounce back from adversity' (Beddoe, Davys and Adamson, 2013) and its links with emotional intelligence are becoming seen as important in the workplace. It is usually conceptualised as a two-dimensional construct 'including the experience of adverse conditions and the presence of positive skills in coping with these conditions' (Beddoe, Davys and Adamson, 2013, p. 101). Psychological resilience is considered to display characteristics of emotional self-awareness, emotional expression and emotional self-control (Armstrong, Galligan and Critchley 2011). The focus of current research on professional resilience in social work considers the extent to which social workers' emotional and social competencies impact on their experience of social work education and their subsequent professional career, and how resilience can be enhanced and developed in practitioners (Kinman & Grant, 2011; Grant and Kinman, 2015). While the critiques of resilience are sparse, some writers like Garrett (2015) have been critical of the concept itself and its emerging dominance in social work by highlighting that seeing resilience as an individual responsibility, minimises the impact of broader societal and political contexts on practitioners' experiences. He argues that mainstream 'resilience' theory can be readily 'incorporated into neoliberal policy templates because of the shared emphasis on individual responsibility for coping, competence and success, largely defined in terms of enterprise' (Bottrell, 2009, p. 334 cited in Garrett, 2015, p.1918). Beddoe's et al. (2013, p. 102), research indicates that factors innate to the individual support resiliency; factors that reside in the organisational context and factors linked to the educational preparation of practitioners.

2.5.4 The role of organisational and socio-political factors on resilience

Continuing concerns about workforce retention have prompted research exploring the organisational and socio-political factors of social work practitioners' stress. McFadden, Campbell and Taylor (2014) in their systematic literature review of studies on resilience and burnout in child protection social work identified a range of common factors across 65 studies examined, which they grouped as 'individual' and 'organisational' themes. Individual themes included social workers own personal disposition and personal traumatic experiences, the efficacy of their coping abilities, inadequate preparation by social work education and compassion fatigue. The organisational themes included issues of workload, provision of quality supervision and support, and the nature of the organisational cultures within which the social workers worked. Beddoe et al. (2013) in their literature review highlight four key areas of concern:

- I. An emphasis on knowledge and task rather than supporting the development of a NQSW's professional identity raises concerns about their wellbeing.
- II. The emotional intensity of child protection work can lead to adverse experiences.
- III. The exposure to the distressing experiences of service users, such as abuse, illness and acute grief can contribute to compassion fatigue.
- IV. High caseloads, funding constraints and organisational arrangements can generate workplace adversities.

Neil's (2014) study which interviewed 12 child protection workers in Scotland produced similar research findings to Beddoe et al. Neil found that practitioners were haunted by memories of distressing cases many years after. She also found a common experience of aggression from carers and that practitioners were asked to work in precarious and unpredictable situations. The research also recognised the significant changed role of children and family practitioners as a response to managerialism.

2.5.5 The marginalisation of emotion in the workplace

Altruistic motivations that are influenced by personal experiences are the key drivers for people wishing to train as social workers, and this has endured over time as shown in several studies (Christie and Kruk, 1998; BMRB, 2005; Stevens et al., 2012). Alongside findings that indicate a deep commitment to the profession and satisfaction by students and newly-qualified social workers (Collins et al., 2010; Harr and Moore, 2011), several studies have highlighted the experience of high levels of stress and burnout amongst these cohorts (Jack and Donnellan, 2010; Wilks and Spivey, 2010; Kinman and Grant, 2011).

A significant concern is that students and newly-qualified social workers are reluctant to disclose their emotional reactions to practice or request help and support in the workplace (Wilks and Spivey, 2010; Rajan-Rankin, 2014). A study by Stanley et al. (2012) found that over half of the social workers in their study ($n=50$) who had experienced depression had either delayed seeking help because of the fear of being perceived as unable 'to cope' or feelings of letting down colleagues (Stanley et al., 2012 cited in Moriarty, Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2015). Ingram (2013) argues that social workers may feel that there are not explicit 'permissions' to explore the emotional content and personal impacts of their practice or exercise the degree of autonomy that is implicit within the construct of emotional intelligence. Two systematic reviews on stress and burnout (Coyle et al. 2005; McFadden, Campbell and Taylor, 2014) emphasised, amongst other factors, unsupportive organisational cultures as contributing to stress and burnout given that some social workers may feel reluctant to admit that they are finding it difficult to cope (Gibson 2014).

While the centrality of emotion in social work practice is a well-established discourse, it is also one that is contested. Hennessey (2011) highlights that a central tension exists between relationship-based conceptualisations of social work practice on the one hand and a technical and procedural approach on the other, with each approach imposing different expectations and demands on social workers. According to Ferguson, this narrow proceduralist approach to supervision in the death of Victoria Climbié led to the repression of the emotional content of practice in discussions between social workers and their supervisors. In reviewing the contributing factors in this case, Ferguson's central contention is that 'limited supervision compromised the ability of the workers to use, manage and explore difficult feelings and emotions relating to their work' (Ferguson, 2005, p.792). Morrison first asserted that the emotional contexts of practice should be considered and processed as essential information from which to develop meaning and professional practice responses when working in highly-charged emotional environments with service users (Morrison, 2008).

Studies exploring the role of emotion arising from the intensity of some forms of social work practice reveal that the expression of emotion, particularly anxiety and fear, in the workplace is commonly stigmatised as weakness, and thus is often repressed or ignored (Morrison, 1990; Dwyer, 2007). The marginalisation and suppression of emotion in social work has been highlighted on numerous occasions in the literature by several writers (Morrison, 2007; Munro, 2011; Ruch, 2012). Ruch (2005) states that the suppression of emotion, particularly in child protection work, can be explained by the psychodynamic perspective as a reaction to the intensity of the work and the deep anxiety it invariably provokes. Thus, the suppression of emotion can be considered as the unconscious construction of a social system operating on a systemic level as a defence mechanism against anxiety (Menzies, 1970).

The cumulative effects of the impacts of organisational cultures, time constraints and insufficient support to contain powerful emotions and feelings originating from practice can hinder social workers' ability to think clearly (Ferguson, 2017). This negation of the emotional aspects of practice and the consequent impact on poor performance and decision-making can result in service users being exposed to undue risks of harm (Carpenter et al., 2012; Kinman and Grant, 2014).

Parton (2008) has observed that the suppression of the emotional and relational aspects of practice can be seen to have co-occurred with the proceduralisation of contemporary practice. Munro's (2011) review of child protection also points towards the marginalisation of the social work relationship and hence emotional context of work with service users, given the dominance of the present managerialist and procedural imperatives in the professional

workplace. These imperatives can also be seen within the role of supervision, with supervisors balancing the wider needs of the organisational goals and resources with the performance management of the social worker and to a lesser extent, their individual support needs (Moriarty and Manthorpe, 2012; Moriarty, Baginsky and Manthorpe, 2015). Within this type of supervisory process, practitioners may feel the need to present a professional ‘face’ rather than disclose any experiences of struggle or emotional impacts arising from their work (Ingram, 2012; Ingram, 2013).

Presently there is an acknowledgement for the need to develop emotionally intelligent managers and supervisors who can support their workers’ emotions (Morrison, 2007; Brotheridge, Pollack and Hawyer, 2008; DfE, 2017). Grootegeed and Smith (2018) argue that emotional intelligence for managers is now even more a vital skill at a time of austerity, in keeping the workforce motivated by supporting them to manage their emotions and to reconcile them to the reality of depleted resources that are available for the service users they work with.

2.6 Discussion of findings

To conclude the chapter, the key findings from the literature on the reforms of social work education and the role of emotion in the workplace - are drawn together. The review set out to explore two key questions: the influence of neoliberalism on past and present challenges in social work education and its impact on marginalising emotion in social work. What can be seen is the significant influence of political, ideological beliefs espoused by successive governments over the past four decades. The Conservative and New Labour governments over this period embraced key neoliberal ideas that the market is superior to the state and that public services should be managed like the private sector (Rogowski, 2011). It has also resulted in the promotion of political beliefs, values and practices that promote individual rather than collective responsibility for social problems (Wallace and Pease, 2011).

The current impact of neoliberalism on the reshaping of social work is not only constraining the delivery of services but is also exposing the next generation of social workers to competing conceptualisations of social work: a narrow statutory role and purpose in contrast to advocating for social action. The dominant perspective of the social worker role has been that of a government employee, and this reflects the narrower competency models of social work education and the tensions between specialisation and genericism which threaten to supplant and limit the development of skills in critical analysis. This positioning lends itself to the historical and current discourse on the inadequacy of social work education and ill-prepared social workers so legitimising the need for radical reform of social work education

through the rise of employer influence and the decline of the Academy. The role of critical thinking skills is crucial for new social workers if they are to continue to analyse and theorise the distribution of power in social welfare, and how their professional role and identity can legitimately challenge this. It can be speculated from the literature that the Academy itself needs to recognise more fully that it has become itself too narrowly focused on developing graduates' skilful behaviours to perform social work. This has been at the expense of developing the domains of affect and cognition because of conceding to the government's objectives of narrowly defining the role and function of social work and the unsuccessful attempts by the Academy to counter the attacks on social work values as previously discussed.

The extent to which social work education effectively prepares graduates for practice is an enduring debate. Notably, the first major large-scale enquiry on this topic was undertaken by Peter Marsh and John Triseliotis in the 1990's (Marsh and Triseliotis, 1996). Their study (n=714) analysed how well UK social workers and probation officers were prepared for, and supported, in professional practice. The study findings reported that a significant proportion (85%) felt they were well prepared for practice, but many respondents reported the lack of accessibility to good induction and support for newly qualified workers. Research conducted in 2010 by the Open University built upon this study and found that whilst graduates reported a high degree of confidence, which contributed to their preparedness, graduates felt less prepared for certain areas of practice including working with hostile service users (Nix et al. 2010). Similar research by Agllias (2010) with Australian social work graduates explored the expectations of social work students preparing to transition into the workplace (n=29) and those already in the workplace (n=9). It found that graduates held a realistic perception of many of the challenges of the realities of practice but did not anticipate the high levels of workload demands placed upon them, nor the lack of supervisory support.

Whilst acknowledging that there is limited consensus about how best to measure the preparedness of social workers reliably and objectively (Grant et al, 2014), a scoping review conducted by Moriarty et al in 2011, found that the literature on preparedness focuses too narrowly on the perceptions of the individual practitioners and their managers and does not take account of the context of the wider system of practice (Moriarty et al, 2011). These findings are echoed in a recent New Zealand study, 'Enhancing readiness to practice', where educators reported confidence in the preparedness of their graduates but expressed serious concerns over the organisational environments into which the graduates enter. The study recommends the development of programmes to better support the transition of graduates

into the workplace (Beddoe et al, 2018). The research on preparedness places a significant emphasis on knowledge and skill acquisition and less on professional identity development underpinned by shared values and purpose. Recent research by Moorhead et al. (2019) highlights changes in the Australian social work curriculum that seeks to embed the development of professional identity much more explicitly as part of social work education and the preparedness for practice. It could be argued that supporting the development of graduates' emotional sense of self can lend itself to the development of resilient and professional identities to counter the current challenges of contemporary practice.

To better situate and make sense of the emotional experiences of graduates as they transition to the workplace it is important to locate these experiences within the changing political, ideological and professional context of practice. It is also important to consider more specifically how contemporary social work students are inculcated with a conceptualisation of social work that is contingent on a social justice agenda (IFSW, 2014) within the social and institutional field of the university (Bourdieu, 1977) and then on graduation, transition into the conflicting social and institutional field of the neoliberal workplace. This transition, between conflicted fields without adequate support or preparation, is likely to expose the graduate to a degree of moral and psychological distress that is likely to test their emotional efficacy and resilience on immediate entry to the workplace (Newberry, 2014).

Despite the previous and current tensions affecting social work education and the differing perspectives about what NQSWs should be able to do on entry to the workplace, what is clear is the need for the preparation of NQSWs to be as thorough as possible. NQSWs need to be provided with access to support and supervision to establish themselves as early career professionals in a challenging workplace (Munro, 2011, p.116). The limited literature relating to emotional intelligence and social work may reflect an uneasy relationship between the role of emotions within practice when set against a backdrop of increasingly managerial and proceduralist practices and high expectations of NQSWs to perform on immediate entry to the workplace.

In conclusion, it is important to locate the emotional experiences of NQSWs' transition to the workplace within the broader structural domains outlined above to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. Thus, the methodological design outlined in the next chapter takes account of the influence of the dominant neoliberal discourses in the constitution of the workplace and how this shapes and influences NQSWs' sense of self. It also takes account of the emotional experiences of the NQSWs, the nature of the changing

and competing paradigms for social work, the exposure of the NQSWs to the increased emotional intensity of practice and the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction and overview

The aims and objectives of this study have already been outlined in Chapter One. The overarching research question of this study was, '*How do Newly Qualified Social Workers experience the emotional aspects of their transition to the workplace, and what factors and processes influence their experience?*' The aim of addressing this question was to enhance understanding of how NQSWs emotionally experienced their transition from the completion of a qualifying social work programme to their first professional role in the workplace. The objectives of doing this were to:

- a. Identify how qualifying social work education might need to be improved so that students are better prepared for their transition to practice.
- b. Inform employers about what more they can do to support NQSWs through this transition process.

This chapter begins by discussing the rationale for selecting a qualitative approach to the study and why this approach was considered the most appropriate to this inquiry. It then introduces the research participants, the sampling strategies used to select the participants, and the data required to inform the study. The latter part of this chapter discusses the specific data-collection and data-analysis strategies employed and the theoretical framework used.

3.2 Research context

3.2.1 Rationale for using a qualitative methodological research approach

Methodology takes account of the wider philosophical issues on the nature of reality and the process of knowledge construction (Padgett, 2008). Along with these ontological and epistemological considerations, I also considered the axiological concerns which centred on the values that I brought to the research process as an insider-researcher and how the influence of these values was explicitly considered using reflexivity and critical reflection throughout the whole research process. As the primary purpose was to listen to, and understand the experiences of NQSWs', a qualitative interpretive research paradigm was adopted (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative approaches are preferable when participants' experiences and values are the focus of research enquiry (Silverman, 2000; D'Cruz and Jones, 2004). Given this is a broad methodological approach; consideration was given to the nature of the relationship between the research problem, the research purpose and the participants in formulating the specific methodological design of the study. Regarding epistemological assumptions, qualitative research practice maintains that the

researcher is also part of the construction of the ontological reality. This positioning about the construction of reality sat well with the broader insider-researcher frame and my role as a researcher formed a significant part of the research context, both regarding insider-research considerations and my involvement in the co-construction of data. The reflexive approach to the study allowed reflexive knowledge to emerge: information on *what* is known as well as *how* it is known (Etherington, 2007). A reflexive researcher does not simply report facts or 'truths' but actively constructs interpretations of his or her experiences in the field, and then questions how those interpretations came about (Hertz, 1997).

The research methodology was underpinned by a subjectivist ontological perspective and adopted a qualitative psychosocial research design (Clarke, 2002; Taylor, 2017). This approach was believed to lead to a deeper level of understanding of the participants' emotional experiences as it recognised the influence of defence mechanisms that inhibit the articulation of emotional states (Cooper and Lousada, 2005). As the research methodology also aimed to address both the social and psychological elements of the process of transition, it incorporated the voice-centred relational method (Brown and Gilligan, 1992) in its design. As in the literature review, the methodological design attempted to merge the psychosocial with the structural domains to reinforce the distinctive contribution this study aims to make. Findings were analysed within a conceptual framework that incorporated a critical neoliberal political perspective and took account of the increasing emotional intensity of social work practice, and what mechanisms were available to NQSWs in the workplace for the containment of emotion (Bion, 1962). Whilst some would argue that these are two diametrically opposing lenses, they were brought together to combine the psychosocial and structural spheres that can influence emotional experience based on an underlying premise that emotions are both psychosocially and socially structured within a political context. Applying psychoanalytical insights and observational skills in the analysis of the data, led to an enriched understanding of the participants' experiences and responses to the process of transition from a qualifying social work programme to the professional workplace.

The primary orientation of this study was exploratory, as it attempted to listen to the emotional experiences of NQSWs' and then generate interpretation and meaning from their stories to better understand how they could be supported in the process of transition to the workplace. Listening and establishing meaning was achieved through a critical analysis of participants' subjective experiences using semi-structured interviews and the voice-centred relational analysis method (Gilligan, 1982; Balan, 2005; Mauthner and Doucet, 2012; Woodcock, 2016). The analysis was undertaken by working to a psychosocial epistemology

whereby it was assumed (based on psychoanalytic thinking and attachment theory) that current behaviours are influenced by earlier experiences and relationships (Bowlby, 1969; Taylor, 2017).

Given the importance of NQSWs' perceptions and experiences before, during and after social work education, a general premise taken in this study was that individuals seek an understanding of the world within which they live, study and work. Thus, an emphasis on lived experience and meaning-making processes was considered integral within the process of transition from a social work graduate to becoming a social work professional. These meanings are negotiated socially, historically and culturally through interactions with others through various historical and cultural norms (Crotty, 1998; Creswell, 2007). This stance lent itself to a qualitative paradigm and constructivist framework being adopted as the underlying ontological position to the research. Phenomenology was also included as a part of the methodological orientation to explore the emotional experiences of NQSWs as they negotiated and made their transition to the workplace and attempted to consolidate themselves as resilient and emotionally intelligent professionals.

3.2.2 Purpose: identifying the problem

A major theme that was identified in the literature by the Critical Analytical Study (CAS) was the higher rates of stress and burnout experienced by early career social workers compared to other helping professionals (Kinman and Grant, 2011). Alongside this, it was identified that a strong relationship existed between workplace stress experienced by some social workers and the poor retention of early career practitioners (Jack and Donnellan, 2010). Equally, the review of the literature outlined in the previous chapter revealed that despite the increasing intensity of social work practice that NQSWs were exposed to, there was a general tendency to marginalise emotion in the workplace (Morrison, 2007; Ingram, 2013). The expression of emotion, particularly anxiety and fear, was commonly stigmatised as weakness, and thus was often repressed or ignored (Morrison, 1990; Dwyer, 2007).

In her Government-commissioned review of child protection, Eileen Munro drew connections between a practitioner's low emotional efficacy, poor performance and distorted decision making (Munro, 2011). One of the main concerns identified in the CAS was that poor work performance was to a considerable extent dependent on the ability and efficacy of the NQSW to self-regulate emotional impacts arising from direct practice. Difficulties with self-regulating emotion and the consequent effect on poor performance and decision making were seen to potentially result in service users being exposed to inadequate interventions and undue risks of harm (Carpenter et al., 2012; Kinman and Grant, 2013).

Consequently, the methodological design had to be responsive to the twin problems of 'emotional silencing' in the workplace and the powerlessness that this invariably invoked for NQSWs. This pointed towards the utilisation of a narrative methodology which could adequately interrogate structural power relations through prioritising the 'voice' of those experiencing these issues. Within this broadly narrative inquiry, I incorporated the voice-centred relational method, which is based on a feminist relational ontology, to ensure that the voices of marginalised participants were adequately represented, and structural power relations sufficiently considered.

3.2.3 The research participants

This section describes the methods used to select the research participants and how they were identified and recruited for this study. It also outlines the contextual issues about the setting of the research encounters, geographical region of the selected universities and the nature of the workplace organisations where the participants were subsequently employed. This outlining is important as one of the basic tenets of qualitative research is that each research setting is unique regarding contextual factors and the individuals within them. This outlining was also necessary so that the scope of the study is presented as clearly as possible (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008).

The sampling strategy was dictated by the purpose of the study and aimed to select participants that were nearing the end of their qualifying social work training and more than likely entering the workplace in their first professional role as a social worker. The reason to use purposeful sampling was to select information rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Palinkas et al.; 2015). Thus, the methods of data collection involved purposive sampling of five participants; initially recruiting seven participants, two deciding to withdraw.

Prospective participants were selected by sending invites and the research information sheet (see Appendix 1) via an email forwarded by course directors to final year cohorts with approximately 40 enrolled students on three qualifying social work programmes. Three programmes were selected as they lay geographically within convenient commuting distance to undertake the face-to-face interviews. Also, it was acknowledged that representativeness in qualitative research is considered as secondary to the participant's ability to provide information about themselves and their setting (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2008). The inclusion criteria sought those who indicated that they intended to actively find employment in social work on completion of their studies and were given priority in selection. Contingency planning was undertaken as part of the sampling strategy to compensate for any selected

participants who failed to progress through their studies or failed to seek employment within a relatively brief period after qualification. In retrospect this strategy was ineffective, and one participant chosen had not gained employment as a social worker at the time of the second interview, working as a locum social work assistant.

The overall response rate was very low at approximately 6% in this study. On reflection, the strategy to recruit graduates should have commenced much earlier, perhaps during the middle of their final year of education. It is likely that nearing the end of qualification students were too pre-occupied with meeting the final demands of the course and actively involved in seeking employment along with dealing with the transition of endings of their course. The participant demographics are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Participant (pseudonym)	Age	Sex (M/F)	Ethnicity	University type & level	Workplace setting & region	1 st interview	2 nd interview
Emily	26	F	White	Pre-1992 PG	Statutory Children & Families team-Midlands	2 weeks into post	7 months into post
Laura	38	F	White	Pre-1992 PG	Statutory MASH team-Midlands	2 weeks into post	7 months into post
Nia	50	F	Black	Post-1992 UG	Locum-London	1-month pre-post	6 months into post
Rose	50	F	Black	Post-1992 UG	Statutory Children & Families team-Yorkshire	3 weeks-pre-post	6 months into post
Sarah	51	F	White	Post-1992 UG	Statutory Child Assessment team-Midlands	3 weeks into post	6 months into post

While I had intended to interview all participants before their entry to the workplace, three of the first phase interviews were conducted within a three-week period of the NQSWs entry into the workplace. The phase two interview was done within a 6-7 months period into their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), bar the participant employed as a locum. As participants were interviewed at different stages during the first interview, i.e. pre or post entry to the workplace, they could not talk in the same way about the transition. This

study is thus best described as participants being at a range of points in relation to making a move from the university to the workplace. However, a consistent aspect of the study is the two-phase design which meant that differing perspectives could be gained from the participants over time.

3.2.4 Overview of information needed

The principal types of information required to answer the research questions of the study were identified as part of the methodology so that this could shed light on the problem being investigated. Bloomberg and Volpe (2007) highlights four common areas of information needed for qualitative studies: contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical (see Table 2).

Before conducting the second phase interview, I briefly familiarised myself with the contextual information about the workplace organisation where the participants were employed. I accessed organisational information through web searches by locating the local authority's corporate plan, strategic children's plans and any specific team information that was available as to the services they provided, e.g. Assessment and Referral, MASH. This information gave me some familiarity with the environment and culture of the participant's workplace setting. This awareness was important as it reflected a fundamental premise taken in the research; human behaviour is a function of the interaction of the person in the environment (Lewin, 1935). The person-in-environment theory is a key concept and underpinning philosophy of a practice orientating perspective for social work practice and social work education (Bartlett, 1958 in Holosko, 2003). The required theoretical information for the research has already been identified in the review of the literature (Chapter Two) and includes information searched and collected from various literature sources to evaluate what is currently known about the topic of inquiry.

Table 2: Overview of Information Needed

Type of information	What information is required	Method
Contextual	Organisational background of workplace setting including structure; mission; vision; values and purpose.	Web searches of key organisation documents Observation while attending workplace.

Demographic	Descriptive information of participants regarding age, ethnicity, level of social work studies, type of agency, regional location	Survey Discussion
Perceptual	Participants' descriptions and explanations of their hopes and anxieties of their first professional role and emotional experiences of actual transition to the workplace.	Interviews Focus groups
Theoretical	Already gathered: highlights the notion that an individual cannot be understood outside of the various aspects of their environment such as social, political, familial, temporal, spiritual, economic and physical. The literature review also posits that this person-in-environment philosophical stance is currently under attack by the individualising political milieu of neoliberalism.	Literature review

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Conceptual framework: a narrative inquiry

A conceptual framework in research is defined as the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs research and thus is a key part of the methodological design (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2011). As the primary purpose of this study was to give voice to the participants' stories in allowing them to express their emotional experiences of entering the workplace, a narrative inquiry was employed as the overarching methodological orientation for the study. This provided a means of understanding and inquiring into the experience through "a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20). The methodology allowed participants to tell their story and share their subjective experiences and enabled an analysis of the construction of events while considering the interplay between the storyteller and the listener.

Narrative inquiry is an umbrella term that aims to capture the personal human dimensions of experience over time, acknowledging the relationships of individual stories and the cultural contexts within which they are told (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The value of employing a narrative approach in this study was that it allowed individuals to discuss, represent and to an extent analyse their own stories as they are experienced by themselves which challenged

traditional and modernist views of truth, reality, knowledge and personhood (Bruner, 1991; Etherington, 2009). The social constructionist nature of narrative inquiry views knowledge and knower as interdependent and embedded in history, context, culture, language, experience, and understandings. It dispenses with the notion of 'absolute truth' and takes a pluralist position suggesting critical reflection on our truths. It values local knowledge constructed between people who actively engage in its development –participatory or relational knowing (Wang and Geale, 2015).

'Narrative knowing' is created and constructed through stories of lived experiences and the meaning created of these experiences. These stories do not represent 'life as lived' of the participants but representations of those lives as told by the researcher. Knowledge gained is 'situational, transient, partial and provisional; characterised by multiple voices, perspectives truths and meanings' (Etherington, 2009). Narrative approaches sit well with phenomenological approaches to research in that they describe the meaning of several individuals lived experience of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2006). Thus, researchers who adopt a phenomenological stance focus on describing the commonality in the experience of all participants, i.e. reducing individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of a universal essence (van Manen, 1990).

3.3.2 Psychosocial research methodology

Narrative phenomenological approaches to research have some overlap with psychosocial research which is a relatively new methodology in qualitative research. It also has the potential to reveal deeper understandings and nuances of the psychological and emotional aspects of human experience which are thought to be experienced and enacted within the social and relational environment. Psychosocial research derives from the disciplines of psychoanalysis and sociology and builds upon traditional ethnographic research methods (Clarke, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2002, 1989). Psychosocial research perspectives are based upon the underlying premise that unconscious forces act as mediators between the researcher and researched and acknowledge that the affective dynamics of this encounter are largely influenced by what each person brings to that encounter, whether this is tacit or pre-conscious, and that this will be communicated affectively (Hunt, 1989, in Clarke and Hoggett, 2009, p. 33):

'the subject's behaviour and unconscious transferences toward the researcher may generate the development of reciprocal reactions and transferences.'

Clarke and Hoggett have suggested that these types of affective and non-discursive communications have been conceptualised in psychosocial research as transference and

countertransference and that currently, psychoanalysis considers transference relationally to countertransference as a co-produced dynamic process (ibid, p13). It is also useful to see countertransference as both proactive and reactive. Proactive countertransference is what the researcher brings to the research encounter or the researcher's transference toward the interviewee. Reactive countertransference is what the researcher reacts to in the interviewee (Clarkson, 2003; LeFevre, 2008). Accordingly, a psychosocial method pays close attention to the emotions, thoughts and motivations of the interviewee. Alongside its focus on exploring the subjective experiences of research participants, a psychosocial approach also considers the social psychodynamics that are generated and operate in the construction of the research environment. Hence psychosocial research is concerned both with the subjective and inter-subjective experiences of the researcher and researched in the construction and generation of knowledge and meaning (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013).

The production of data in a psychosocial interview comes from the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, both of whom come to the interview situation with their anxieties, defences and histories which can affect the data that is created. A key assumption is that the subject and the researcher are both 'defended' to sustain and protect the ego by the unconscious constraining of their social worlds (Robinson, 2011).

Some theorists like Frosh and Baraitser (2008), whilst advocates of the clinical applications of psychoanalysis, are critical of the use of interpretative tools such as transference and countertransference outside of the clinical setting to inform data analysis as part of psychosocial research. Their main contention is that these dynamics are products of the clinical encounter which is premised by the therapeutic relationship and applying these clinical concepts outside of this setting runs the risk of their inappropriate use in the interpretation of an interviewee's unconscious anxiety. The notion of the defended subject is then at risk of being attributed to the unconscious anxieties of the researcher, whom themselves is a defended subject (Hollway, 2008 in Clarke, Hoggett and Hahn, 2009). Researchers who do not have clinical training may fail to identify that the anxiety they attribute to their interviewees is, in fact, an unrecognised emergent aspect of their unconscious anxieties and desires (Frosh, 2003; Frosh and Baraitser, 2008), particularly in the data production process.

The extent to which a researcher's primary projections might influence the analysis is a contested argument, and it was important for me to take a position on this. A decision was to be made on whether I considered my impressions and feelings as countertransference which informed me about possible projections by the interviewees, or as my primary transference

to their material, and thus informed the study findings of myself rather than the participants. Many psychosocial researchers adopt a third position, which considers it could be either and the role of the researcher (as with the therapist) is to work out whom the primary projections in a research encounter belong to and how they might help the researcher to understand the situation.

3.3.2.1 The defended subject

Through the introduction of this concept of the defended subject, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) claim that interviewees are necessarily psychically defended –that is, that everyone has an unconscious which contains motivations, instincts and impulses which are constrained by the social world in which he or she lives. This means that both will be subject to the projections and introjections of ideas and feelings coming from the other person. It also suggests that the impressions that we have about each other are not derived merely from the ‘real’ relationship, but that what we say and do in the interaction will be mediated by internal fantasies which derive from our histories of significant relationships (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.45). A defended subject may not tell a complete and transparent story, whether that is a conscious or unconscious act. The approach recognises the influence of these defence mechanisms that inhibit the articulation of emotional states (Cooper and Lousada, 2005). As the study progressed, I became more cognizant of the fact that my primary projections had the potential to influence the analysis and this is discussed later.

3.3.2.2 Objectivity in research

Feminist concerns and critiques of objectivity in research have led to the design of protocols in qualitative research which acknowledge that the researcher influences data production and interpretation and thus objectivity in research is an unrealistic expectation to achieve (Harding, 1993; Oleson, 2000). Therefore, researcher reflexivity and positioning are essential elements to make explicit in research and establish how these forms of researcher identity are linked to questions of disparity in social power within the research dyad (Seiter, 1999, p.13). Whilst these considerations are commonly made as part of the ethical considerations underpinning the research methodology, what is less common in research is the acknowledgement of the unconscious processes that influence and structure the research relationship and its impact on the production of data.

Hunt (1989) highlights that the researcher’s self is a “primary instrument of inquiry” and their mental experience “mediates their understanding of the cultural and psychological world of subjects” (Hunt, 1989, p. 13). To address this issue of researcher identity, I kept a detailed research diary which recorded my thoughts, feelings, affective responses, imagery,

assumptions and fantasies after each interview encounter with the participants and again during the intensive reading of the recorded transcripts to assess the impact of my emotional involvement on the interpretation of data. The main aspects of my own identity that had relevance here were my own childhood experiences of adversity which resonated with some of the respondents' experiences. My gender as a male was also significant in the encounters, when participants spoke of the harm that men in their lives, whether fathers or partners had inflicted upon them.

Whilst considering respondents' transference relations to service users, the workplace and myself as a researcher, I also considered the significance and intersectionality of my own defendedness as a practitioner alongside that of an educator and a researcher, and my countertransference responses to the respondents and the potential for proactive countertransference dynamics (Frosh, 1991; 2010).

3.3.2.3 Transference and countertransference

Psychosocial research incorporates the use of psychoanalytical interpretative tools and concepts, such as projective identification and transference dynamics, as a means of analysing and interpreting unconscious motivations. This allows for a higher degree and depth of understanding to emerge of both individual experience and how the psychodynamics operate in constructing the research setting. Hollway (2008), citing Bion's concept of the 'container-contained relationship', asserts that this conceptualisation provides a radical tool for a psychosocial research epistemology. She highlights the role of a researcher's subjectivity and inter-subjective experiences with the respondent, i.e. identification with objects can provide a powerful instrument for knowing, as in Bion's concept of 'learning by experience' (Bion, 1970).

Since psychosocial approaches are primarily concerned with the psychodynamics evoked through an inter-subjective encounter, the re-analysis of this encounter was facilitated through a focus on the interview transcripts and an exploration of why respondents constructed their narratives in certain ways, what was said and why. The affective and cognitive reflexivity of the researcher allows opportunities to reconsider the emotional responses to the 'encounter' through the interview transcript by a focus on transference and counter-transference dynamics and allows some insight into the unconscious processes of the interviewee. Applying these psychoanalytical insights and observations in the analysis of interview data led to an enriched understanding of the respondent's experience and responses to the process of transition from a qualifying programme to the workplace. The vehicle that facilitated this re-analysis of the interview encounter was the voice-centred relational

analysis method and its four-stage readings of the interview transcript as described later in this chapter. For these reasons, the overarching narrative methodology incorporated a qualitative psychosocial research design.

3.3.2.4 Containment and anxiety

Bion's (1962) concept of containment as a means of exploring how emotion and affect are transmitted and managed through human relations, and the ability to 'contain' anxiety was a key theorisation that was applied to understand the emotional experiences of the participants. Bion argued that anxiety was a natural part of everyday living and emotional experience and could be experienced both positively (contained) and negatively (uncontained). Thus, he considered anxiety to be both affective and relational to behaviour and cognition, and uncontained anxiety, manifested through overwhelming emotion, had the potential to interrupt rational cognition and thinking. Parry (2007) also highlights that early experiences of positive containment enable individuals to develop cognitive abilities to manage experiences and emotions. When individuals experience inadequate containing experiences, or these are significantly interrupted for example through childhood adversities, then normative cognitive and emotional development are affected. Uncontainable feelings and experiences are normal and arise throughout the lifespan and thus an individual's emotional containing capacities are regularly tested (Oswalt, 2010).

Ruch (2007) highlights that containment exists as a process, and this process can be facilitated by a person or thoughtful activity i.e. 'container'. Hinshelwood (1991, 2000) states that the role of the 'container' is to facilitate the 'raw anxiety' of an individual and provide emotional understanding until such a point that the individual can tolerate the anxiety for themselves. Whilst Bryman (2001) highlights that all research relations should aim to facilitate communication and rapport with the participant, the concept of containment more specifically aims to address the 'adverse impact of uncontained anxiety on how people think, behave and relate to each other' (Ruch 2007, p526). This suggests the inter-related nature of the cognitive, affective and behavioural domains and the experience and management of anxiety.

3.4 Data collection

This section outlines the data-collection and analysis methods utilised in this study and explains the logical connections between these methods and the research questions and research approach. Before this, a pilot study is briefly outlined which guided the development of the research questions, data collection methods and assessed the utility of the voice-centred relational method as a method of data analysis.

3.4.1 Canadian pilot study

During the first three years of the doctorate programme, I lived in Canada and worked as a social work regulator and practice consultant. Part of my role was to authorize the professional registration of new social workers entering the Province and act as a consultant on ethical dilemmas in practice. I became increasingly involved with Canadian Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) who were seeking professional consultation with the complexities of their casework. What occurred to me through these engagements was the common expressions of overwhelming anxiety and a lack of confidence in professional abilities amongst this cohort. These experiences began to raise questions about what may be happening, so I undertook a small-scale pilot study to explore this further as it related to an emerging focus for this thesis. I interviewed three NQSWs from differing parts of the Province to conduct a study to explore the nature of the emotional experience of being a newly appointed professional social worker. I was also interested in exploring the voice-centred relational method as a means of data analysis method to voice the NQSWs' emotions. This pilot usefully drew out some observations on emotional experience and helped shape the research focus of this thesis. While these observations were informative, it was important to consider them within the context of Canadian social work and not to infer any generalizations from them. This context is briefly outlined below followed by the observations drawn.

3.4.1.1 The Canadian social work context

The historical development of Canadian social work follows a similar trajectory to that seen in England, and the work of the Charity Organisation Society founded in 1869. Canadian social work was originally set up to provide relief to the poor, whose predicaments were generally believed to be the result of weaknesses of character. Social work in Canada significantly expanded following the Great Depression in the 1930s, and the number of social workers grew to meet the needs of those consequently left in destitution. After WWII, social work in Canada, as in England, began the path towards professionalisation, establishing a fledgling professional status by the end of the 1970s. Today, social workers work in a variety of settings which include child welfare agencies (public and private) which deal with incidences of child abuse and neglect. Many social workers also work in general and psychiatric hospitals where they are members of multidisciplinary treatment teams. Many school boards employ social workers to support students to adjust to the school environment.

Social workers also work in the correctional services and federal and provincial government departments (CASW, 2016).

The minimum educational requirement for entry to the profession is a 4-year Bachelor of Social Work or a 2-year master's degree. As in England, the curriculum is split between academic and practice learning components. Criticisms of the quality of social work education are only beginning to emerge in Canada following recent high-profile child deaths like that of Phoenix Sinclair in 2011 (Hughes, 2014). More recently public outrage was expressed over the deaths of 120 children in care in British Columbia in 2016 (MCFD, 2016). Unlike England, these tragedies have not yet fueled a discourse on preparedness and the adequacy of social work education in training social work graduates for practice as discussed in the previous chapter.

3.4.1.2 Observations from the study

Rather than determining any generalisable findings from this pilot given the sample size and the context within which it was undertaken, several key observations made helped to shape the research focus of this thesis and the methodological approach. The key observations were:

1. All NQSWs reported significant early life experiences of transition due to immigrating to Canada to establish a new life. One had fled her home country due to the conflicts of war and the threat of persecution due to her ethnicity. The other two participants had emigrated due to economic reasons. The experiences of such transition are a feature for many Canadians given its recent evolution and expansion as a nation.
2. Some of the life experiences of change and adaptation resonated in the experiences of the NQSWs' transition to the workplace.
3. The NQSWs expressed an overwhelming level of anxiety and stress when asked to explore their emotions arising from direct social work practice.
4. The NQSWs held multiple roles and identities alongside that of an emerging professional.
5. The provision of containing experiences whether in the family environment or the workplace were perceived by the NQSWs to have had some positive outcomes for their psychological wellbeing.

This pilot produced some useful observations and gave me an opportunity to develop my skills in conducting research interviews and generating the focus of the interview questions.

It also provided a practical familiarity with the voice-centred relational method as a data analysis tool and developed a more profound interest in psychosocial research methods.

3.4.2 Data collection: semi-structured interviews

For this thesis study, two semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant thus generating ten interview transcripts from which to create and analyse data which was driven by the research questions. The first interview was intended to be conducted towards the end of the final year of the programme of study, but in two instances participants had already entered the workplace for a period of three weeks. Whilst this was not ideal, the participants could still articulate their feelings of excitement and anticipation they had felt on being appointed and waiting to begin their new role. The second interview was conducted 6-7 months later and, by then, all the participants were in social work employment with one participant still seeking their first permanent appointment. The interviewing strategy aimed to increase the likelihood of exploring Newly Qualified Social Workers' initial experiences of their transition into the workplace, aptly termed as 'reality shock' (Bates, 2010), before they adopted and embedded coping mechanisms which were likely to make it more difficult for them to articulate and *bring to the surface* their emotional reactions to the experience of transition. This time frame complemented the methodological approach to be taken in that it addressed both the social and psychological elements of the process of transition.

The semi-structured interviews were broadly based on the psychosocial free association narrative interview (FANI) method (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013). This meant questions were framed to elicit free narrative, as far as practicable, in exploring participants' experiences of the process of transition from their pre-qualifying programme to qualified practice in the workplace (see Table 3). The interviews also aimed to elicit the extent to which participants' own personal and relational history was significant in their response to coping or not coping with this transition.

Table 3: Interview Questions Matrix

<p><i>Research question 1</i></p> <p>What role do personal histories, individual traits and relational or organisational factors play in NQSWs' emotional response to this transition?</p>	<p>What was your early childhood like?</p> <p>What do you feel helped you to deal with difficulties in your early upbringing?</p> <p>What were significant experiences that drew you towards wanting to work with people and social work?</p> <p>What does your journey to the social work course look like?</p>	<p>Phase one interview</p>
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Research question 2 To what extent do NQSWs feel their qualifying programme prepared them for their transition to the workplace?	How far did your social work course prepare you for the workplace? What were the key parts of learning from the course that influenced your development? What could have been done differently or improved upon during your education?	Phase one interview
Research question 3 How do NQSWs emotionally experience their transition to the workplace and what in their view supports or hinders this?	How did it feel on entering the workplace? What do you feel supported you in this process? What do you feel was particularly difficult in entering the workplace?	Phase two interview
Research question 4 What mechanisms in the employing agency support or hinder NQSWs in their transition to the workplace?	How far do you feel supported in your workplace? What are the sources of support on offer to you? What could have been provided to better support you on entry to the workplace?	Phase two interview

3.5 Data Analysis

As the focus of this study was on exploring the emotional experience of transition to the workplace and the subjective meanings that participants attached to these experiences, the voice-centred relational method (VCRM) was combined with thematic analysis and the psychosocial approach in analysing respondents' accounts from the individual interviews. This provided the methodological, conceptual model to manage the 'depth' of the data as it acknowledged both the subjectivity of the respondent and the researcher (Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). This approach to analysis aimed to combine psychosocial understandings of individual experience, as represented in the theoretical perspectives noted earlier, with broader structural understandings and is further claimed as an original contribution of this study.

3.5.1 Voice-centred relational method

The voice-centred relational method (VCRM), based on Gilligan's (1982) early work is grounded in relational theory and feminist educational psychology. It has been employed by numerous feminist researchers particularly concerned with uncovering the power,

relationships and contexts of participants by focusing on attending to the voice of the participant from several perspectives (Paliadelis and Cruickshank, 2008).

The VCRM was further developed by Doucet and Mauthner (1998; 2002), and a shift in language between Brown and Gilligan's (1992) 'listening' to the data compared to the 'reading' of the data is observable (Doucet and Mauthner, 1998). While Brown and Gilligan are concerned with attending to the authentic voice of women, added importance to the interview transcript is emphasised as a tool for analysis as the method has been refined by Doucet and Mauthner (2008). They go on to state that the VCRM "explores individual's narrative accounts in terms of their relationships to themselves, their relationships to people around them, and their relationships to broader social, cultural and structural contexts within which they live" (p.9).

The VCRM emphasises that the construction of self takes place through the shaping of relationships within the relational context (Brown and Gilligan, 1992). Doucet and Mauthner propose a circular and hermeneutic process of analysis based on the notion of 'relational ontology, i.e. viewing an individual is embedded in a complex web of intricate and larger social relations' (1998, p.125) in employing the voice-centred relational method. This requires at least four re-readings of transcripts to 'hear' the different voices that are present, including both those of the researcher and researched.

While the approach by Brown et al. (1989) is concerned with ways language can construct 'reality' (Coffey et al., 1996), Doucet and Mauthner (1998) are also concerned with how the reality of the research situation can construct what is said. Therefore, a key aim of this method is to maintain the respondent's 'voice' as central to the analysis alongside making explicit the processes that the researcher consciously or unconsciously employs to form interpretation from the respondent's interview accounts. The voice-centred relational method, therefore, suited the 'illuminative' (Parlett and Hamilton, 1977) aim of my study and the epistemological underpinnings, as it is concerned with 'description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction'.

The method is 'voice-centred' in that it enables exploration of individuals' narrative accounts of experience. It is 'relational' because it recognises that these individual accounts are also necessarily situated into a broader network of personal social relationships and cultural and social structures and are generated within a relationship between the respondent and researcher (Fairclough, 2007, p. 6).

Influences are also drawn upon from psychoanalytical theory as the method firstly acknowledges the multi-layered nature of the human psyche, that is the totality of the human

mind, conscious and unconscious and thus 'draws upon voice, resonance and relationships as ports of entry into the human psyche.' (Gilligan et al., 2003, p.65). The voice-centred relational method has a four-stage reading sequence which the researcher engages with and immerses themselves, in interpreting and generating meaning.

3.5.2 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is considered a flexible qualitative analysis tool that can be used across different paradigms, theoretical perspectives, and epistemological approaches (Braun and, 2006). It was identified as a suitable process to analyse the findings generated by the VCRM as whilst it acknowledged the individual and unique narratives of the respondents it also sought to identify significant themes that emerged and cut across the individual stories (Browne, 2004). Thus, it provided for a rich and detailed analysis of the generated qualitative data, highlighting common themes and patterns in the experiences of the respondents. Thematic analysis is described as a recursive process as the researcher repeatedly moves through the stages and between the data sets, the coded extracts of data, and the analysis.

The principal objective of this research was to inform the practice of educators and employers to better support and facilitate the transition of graduates from the completion of their social work education into their first professional social worker role in the workplace. Synthesising the respondents' accounts into a meaningful whole would allow these research objectives to be met and thematic analysis was utilised, and this method is described below.

Thematic analysis involved scanning the whole generated data across the four stages of the VCRM for themes and identifying any relationships between them that emerged within individual respondent's accounts and across the entire sample. I undertook a brief coding of the data based on my deep familiarity with the respondents' accounts, deciding upon which aspects were pertinent to the research questions. I identified and coded the various emotional responses that were articulated in both phases of the interviews. Thus, this process of identification generated a series of possible codes that I manipulated as part of the thematic analysis using the qualitative data management software programme Nvivo (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This tool was used to organise the data generated by the accounts and supported the process of my analysis as I systematically selected the identified codes in the respondents' accounts and labelled these as nodes in the Nvivo software (see Appendix 2).

3.5.2.1 Focus groups

Alongside the interviews, I utilised two focus groups as part of the data collection methods. As Breen (2006) points out, focus groups are complementary to one-to-one interviews in qualitative research as they enable the generation of new ideas formed within a social context

(p. 466). The composition of the focus groups consisted of a separate group of social workers who had just commenced their first year of professional practice i.e. at the commencement of their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and a second group of practitioners coming towards the end of their ASYE. The first focus group consisted of ten participants and the second of four. The primary aim of employing these focus groups as part of the methodological design was to clarify, extend and qualify the findings derived from the thematic analysis and their applicability to direct social work practice.

3.5.3 Generating data

The four-step process of the VCRM was used as the main approach to generate and analyse data from the interview transcripts. These analyses were then further explored using thematic analysis. A psychosocial approach was taken to generate findings from the personal narratives and 'I-Poems' of the respondents' and a neoliberal political lens to explore the identified relational and contextual issues in the respondents' narratives. This design facilitated the merging of psychosocial and structural factors that influenced the respondents' emotional experiences and is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2.

3.5.3.1 Step 1: Reading for the plot and researcher response

Common to other forms of qualitative analysis that seek to interpret interview data, the first reading of the VCRM attempts to identify the whole story or plot that the respondent is articulating. The purpose is for the researcher to become wholly acquainted with the intricacies of the narrative to orient the researcher in 'knowing the who, what, where, when and why', (Brown and Gilligan 1992; Gilligan et al., 2003). Thus, attention is given to the narrative being told (the plot), images, themes repeated and the context and landscape of the entire transcript (Balan, 2005). However, what is different in the VCRM is that after identifying the story, the researcher's response to what is said and reactions to the respondent is reflected upon and recorded as reflexive accounts and then integrated into the composition of the overall analysis (stage 4).

Attention is given to the researcher's feelings and the thoughts elicited by the respondent's story. Thus, a reflective diary was used to immediately record my responses and reactions to what I had heard and felt at the end of the interview. On further reading of the transcribed interview, while simultaneously listening to the audiotaped interview, further reflections were made as I listened to what was said and to some extent what was not. There is attention in this part of the analysis on researcher reflexivity, emotional responses, intellectual and experiential influences and the institutional context (Fairtlough, 2007).

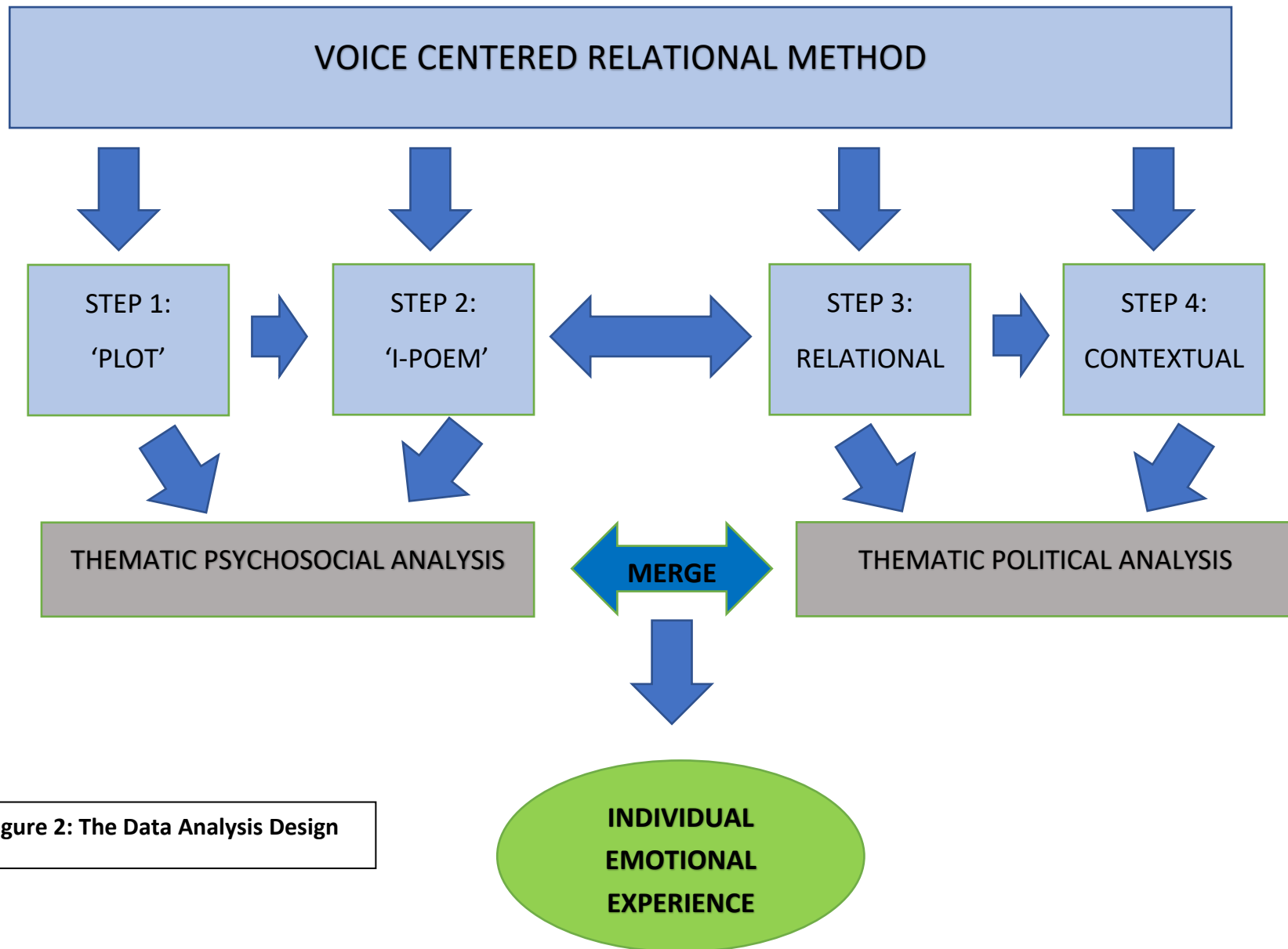


Figure 2: The Data Analysis Design

A primary analytic tool in the VCRM is the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 2015), and I adapted this by recording my emotional and intellectual responses to the respondent's story by exploring my countertransference reactions. Thus, I could reflect upon and locate my own affective and intellectual reactions to respondents' stories. The aim was to uncover how my responses to the respondent might have affected understanding and the analysis produced (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). Whilst listening to the words that were expressed by the respondents it was equally important to listen to how these were said regarding the tone of voice, pace, pauses and silences as these observations add richness to the generated data. As Kvale (2007) points out, the taped recordings of the interviews remain as abstractions, and it is difficult to record and then replay body language, posture and gestures that the respondents may have made at particular points in the interview.

3.5.3.2 Step 2: Reading for the 'Voice of I'

The second reading focused specifically on the respondent and how they spoke about themselves. I employed a three-stage process whereby I generated condensed 'I-Poems' for each respondent. The first stage was to read the full written interview transcript, highlighting every occurrence of the use of "I" and the related text. Gilligan's Listening Guide outlines an explicit process that is to be followed (Gilligan, 2015). Analysis of these generated 'I-Poems' consider how people create meaning and how these meanings influence action (Blumer, 1969). The constructing of this personal story re-asserts the voice of the respondent explicitly above the main story and conveys in first person voice an expression of the respondent's mood, aspirations, fears, dreams, anxieties, experiences and sense of uncertainty in a focused and precise manner.

The extract below from a respondent's interview shows how I highlighted the text. It also exemplifies the nature and depth of discussions that were held in the interview engagements.

I was alone, yeah. Just feeling really like I was a bit lost. I wasn't really enjoying my life, I've always had friends and family surrounding me, but my work just felt really unfulfilling. I wanted something that was more- it would drive me, I wanted something that really interested me. I wanted to make that difference in people's lives, and we talked about those different kind of jobs, and she said, "Look, social work's a job where you could do that, you could really put your skills into practice." That's kind of- it was just quite a low time for me. I just felt very, always "where's my life going?" I don't want this to be the rest of my life, I don't want to work in a coffee shop for the rest of my life. That's kind of how I felt. I'd just get really sad a lot of the time, and I just cry a lot of the time, and just feel quite down, really

The second step was to place these highlighted occurrences into stanzas maintaining the phrases in the exact order of occurrence as in the original interview to form an 'I-Poem'.

*I was alone
I was a bit lost.
I wasn't really enjoying my life,
I've always had friends and family,
I wanted something that was more
I wanted something,
I wanted to make that difference in people's lives.
I just felt very, always "where's my life going?"
I don't want this,
I felt.
I'd just get really sad,
I just cry a lot of the time,*

While acknowledging that immersion in the data was an important part of the qualitative methodological approach taken (Steubert-Speziale, 2007) it did present several difficulties regarding the management of large volumes of data that were generated. The 'I-Poem' for each respondent, for example, amounted to approximately 15 pages in length which were unfeasible to include in its entirety in this thesis. Thus, a methodological decision was made to construct a full 'I-Poem' and then attempt to condense it to one page, extracting the parts of the poem which were central to the overarching research topic and research questions. The rationale for condensing the 'I-Poems' was guided by Koelsch's principle that sparse poems are more expressive than poems composed of lengthy and detailed phrases. It was also guided by a practical imperative to make the generated data more manageable and meaningful.

This final step of data condensation was a complicated process as I had to decide which occurrence of 'I' and related text to keep and which to discard. I was cognizant that this process could potentially re-shape the respondent's story, so I also had to ensure that I preserved its integrity as far as possible. Using my skills in reflexivity, the generated condensed 'I-Poem' was read after a re-reading of the full 'I-Poem' and interview transcript to ensure that the story had not become distorted. It was important to pay due consideration to the ethical imperative of remaining true to the respondents' stories while also ensuring the data analysed would assist in illuminating the thesis research questions. Thus, the generated 'I-Poems' are abstractions of my interpretations of the respondents' stories (Edwards and Weller, 2012). This raised a fundamental question as posed by Doucet and Mauthner (2008), as to the 'ontological status' that I ascribed to the research subject, 'are we giving voice to research subjects or voice to research subjects' stories?' (p.402). Equally, it could be claimed that we are giving voice to the stories which the researcher tells about the research subjects' stories.

Following the construction of the condensed 'I-Poem' further reflections on what it represented and expressed were recorded as part of the 2nd reading analysis stage. This was guided by Fairtlough's (2007) adaptation of Brown and Gilligan's model to identify whether the statements expressed emotions, reflections, opinions, actions or intentions.

3.5.3.3 Step 3: Reading for relationships

Mauthner and Doucet (2008, 1998) read for relationships and social contexts in the third and fourth readings respectively. In this way, they linked "micro-narratives and macro-level structures and processes" (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008, p. 406). The third reading required identification of parts of the transcript narrative that centred on the respondent's connections and relationships with others. I paid attention to the significance of interpersonal relationships that were mentioned by the respondents about their experience of social work training and moving into the workplace. During the reading, notes were made about which person or persons were spoken about and the sentiments, stories, emotions or feelings the respondents associated with these people. Of equal interest to me was to note which people who appeared significant in the story where not spoken about. As with Fairtlough's (2007) adaptation of the voice-centred relational method, I found it useful once interpersonal relationships were noted to differentiate between those that were spoken about regarding their effect on the respondent's experiences of training for social work and transition to the workplace, e.g. tutors. Equally, it was important to note those who were mentioned as being affected by the respondent's role as an NQSW, e.g. service users or family.

3.5.3.4 Step 4: Reading for socio-cultural contexts

The final reading attempted to locate and situate respondent's accounts within broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts and their relational connections to these contexts. An emphasis was placed on listening for what was spoken about and what was not but relevant to the underlying story that the respondent was conveying. This stage of the VCRM method was crucial in the context of the overall study as it was adapted to allow the respondents' accounts to be located within the structural and neoliberalised political context of the workplace. The psycho of the psychosocial coupling was rooted in the psychodynamic and emotional and the social in the political and structural (Hunter, 2005).

This final reading outlined the broader context of the analysis of the respondent's narrative by incorporating the other readings which focused on the story, the respondent's sense of self as represented in the condensed 'I-Poem' and the nature of supportive and working relationships. Thus, participant's accounts of their emotional transition to the workplace

could be considered within a merging of the psychosocial and structural domains of experience.

3.5.4 The importance of reflexivity

An integral component of the VCRM is the researcher's reflexivity regarding making explicit the impact of their social location and personal history on the interpretation of the respondent's narrative. As discussed in Chapter One, my early history and journey to social work resonated in part with those of the participants. Their early experiences of adversity stirred difficult emotional responses in me which were manifested in the countertransference dynamics during the interview and when engaging with the interview transcript materials. The recording of these thoughts and emotions in a reflective diary was an essential means of articulation and a source for future reflection when developing interpretation and meaning from the data.

Kiegelmann highlights that the research process is a “relational encounter” (2009, p. 6) and Gilligan et al., (2005) observe that the researcher is an active participant in this process. It was therefore important to create an environment for the interview encounters that was safe and trusting so that the participants felt able to openly share and express their experiences (Latimer, 2008) which could then facilitate a deeper and more nuanced understanding of these experiences (Charon, 2010). Thus, I had to consider before the interviews were held how I would create a safe environment, how I would enter and behave in the interview encounter and how I would ensure that I maintained integrity towards the participants' stories that they shared with me throughout all the stages of the research study. Reflexive awareness and sensitivity were required to maintain a continuing vigilance on these ethical imperatives when conducting the study (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Reflexivity is ‘a dynamic process of interaction within *and* between ourselves and our participants, *and* the data that informs decisions, actions and interpretations at all stages.’ (Etherington, 2004, p.81). This meant that as a researcher I had to operate on multiple levels at the same time, i.e. on affective, cognitive and behavioural domains, whilst simultaneously being in the moment with the participant and sincerely listening to their story. Cooper (2010) highlights that every time we meet, talk or engage with others we adopt certain emotionally invested ways of ‘being’ and thus there is no neutral, emotionally uninvolved way to ‘be’ in a relationship. Meaningful, reflexive engagement was crucial if as a researcher I was to listen to, and hear the authentic voice of the participant as applying the VCRM required an explicit focus to be maintained on my relationship with the participants throughout the study.

The importance of reflexivity is a common feature within feminist traditions of qualitative methodology, as the voice-centred relational method, which also considers the centrality of relationships (Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1994; King, 1996). The psychoanalytical concepts that were particularly useful to support the process of reflexivity were transference, countertransference, containment and resistance (Lefevre, 2008). These mechanisms were considered as part of the reflexive stage of the voice-centred relational method to analyse the respondents' accounts and my emotional responses to them, and the relationships between the two.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical responsibility in qualitative research is an ongoing process, and researchers must respect the mandate of ensuring ethical and moral principles as a core component of human rights, which is central both in social work practice and social work research (Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynnaden, 2000). Adopting a narrative inquiry methodology required a high degree of ethical and critical engagement throughout the duration of the study. Often subtle and embedded within the research process are the concepts of relationships and power between the researcher and participant. Thus, trust and openness were central imperatives within this research relationship.

Reflexivity and sensitivity were particularly important in maintaining a sharp focus on the ethical considerations throughout as the potential for risks to participants invariably change as the methods and research evolve. For example, a participant who openly discusses personal issues pertinent to them in the first interview may feel uncomfortableness when they are presented with these issues in the second interview six months later. Hence, I continually anticipated any new ethical considerations that needed to be made and provided regular opportunities for the participants to seek clarification on the purpose of the research, the nature of their engagement and my role as a researcher. I found it useful to develop a conceptual ethical framework to guide the research study based on three different dimensions of ethics: procedural ethics, ethics in practice and relational ethics (Cutcliffe and Ramcharan, 2002).

Procedural ethics involved seeking ethical approval for this research which was requested and granted from the University of Sussex (see Appendix 3). It also included adherence to the Framework for Research Ethics (ESRC 2012). Anonymity was confirmed to participants by assurances given that their names and any other identifying details would not be included in any written materials and that recordings and transcripts of the interviews would be kept in a protected and safe environment (Wiles et al., 2006). Participants were informed that they

would only be referred to by pseudonyms and the list of participants would be kept separately from the data.

In seeking informed consent, a consent form along with the information sheet was provided to participants (see Appendix 1). These documents explained the purpose of the research, how the research would be conducted, and the level of engagement requested. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any point in the study up until the point of writing the final thesis. I sought written consent from participants at the start of the first interview and the beginning of the subsequent meeting.

Regarding ethics in practice, I anticipated and developed a strategy on how I would manage and deal with issues of discomfort that may have arisen in the interviews and situations where participants revealed vulnerabilities. It was important for me to anticipate beforehand how far I would probe with questioning if these types of scenarios arose. Alongside this, I made explicit the principle of conditional confidentiality, i.e. that if information was exchanged during their involvement in the study or concerns raised which might potentially put service users at risk of harm, then I would be obliged to pursue this matter further. This stems from my ethical responsibility and a legal 'duty to report' as a registered social worker. These safeguards had to be balanced with ensuring the confidentiality of participants so that any concerns that emerged during the study suggesting possible risks to individuals or that illegal behaviours were taking place could be appropriately responded to (Bostock, 2002).

Lastly, regarding relational ethical dimensions, I made considerations mainly related to the ethics of care. I contemplated the nature of the relationship to be established between the participant and myself and to be reflexively aware of the participant's experience of my involvement, and thus to continually clarify the relational boundaries. Given my multiple roles as a novice researcher, experienced practitioner and educator, I remained alert to the varying potential power differentials between the participants and myself which may have needed to be mediated. It was also important to consider how the relational impacted on the actual research process and how this inter-subjective nature of the research design affected the data generated and subsequent interpretations given to this.

Culture, language, and power relations are inevitably at play in the interview encounter and production of biographical subjects and accounts. Also, subjects are not fixed essences waiting to express themselves, and interview talk is not a spontaneous rendering of past reality beyond the interview. Instead, interviews are occasions for producing subjectivity through personal narratives in the present that work on and interpret the past with an eye on the future (Harding, 2006, p.81).

Fundamentally, it was important for me to recognise the centrality of ethics as an ongoing part of the research process and along with this recognition, the mutual respect, dignity and connectedness that should be afforded to participants and which should be tangibly evident in the way the research was conducted and the way participants experienced it. The ethical considerations also related to my role as a psychosocial researcher and were made as a direct response to the same criticisms of the application of psychoanalysis in clinical settings; namely the use of researcher subjectivity and the use of interpretation (Hollway, 2007). The critics of the discipline of psychoanalysis argue that power relations are intrinsic and inextricable from interpretation and therefore claim an application of psychoanalysis in research is unethical (Dufresne, 2007). Relying on my deep sense of professionalism, guided by an explicit ethical and moral perspective, I attempted to engage with the participants in a respectful, sincere and empathic manner as a researcher. It was important to ensure that the knowledge claims made from this study explicitly reflected the partial, situated and constructed nature of knowledge. Bright (2016) asserts that ‘poly-vocality should be evident in dissemination. Researchers should not claim to know the individual, instead presenting a partial understanding of the person’s story’ (p.6).

3.7 Limitations of the study

Qualitative methodologies generally create inherent limitations in research studies when they are applied as research quality is heavily dependent on individual researcher skills there is a danger of personal biases featuring in the many aspects of the research (Atieno, 2009). As an insider –researcher a degree of depth and insight into the focus of exploration was provided. However, this positioning also potentially created insider bias by constraining how I evaluated the weight and significance of specific issues that emerged during the interview encounters and later in the data analysis stages. To counter and minimise this insider bias a significant emphasis was placed on reflexivity. The keeping of a reflexive journal and audio notes of my emotional, intellectual and countertransferential reactions and responses after interview encounters, and at key stages of the data analysis phase allowed me to examine and address how my personal biases may have infiltrated the study. The presentation of the findings and making explicit my interpretations and responses of the respondents' narratives as part of the presentation of findings provided for a degree of transparency to this study. A key tenet of the methodological design was to make explicit the nature of the conscious and unconscious interactions in the interview encounters; a key feature of the co-construction of meaning from the interviews as part of the psychosocial research approach. As mentioned earlier, a key aspect of the ethical considerations of this study was not to lay claim to

objectively representing the respondents' subjectivities and narratives but rather that these were co-produced between the researcher and researched.

A further limitation in the methodological design was the sheer volume of data that was generated and the consequent difficulties with data management and analysis. This also made this entire process extremely time-consuming. To ensure the accuracy of the interviews, I had intended to provide all respondents with a copy of the interview transcript to verify the contents and add to or delete any aspects of the interview in hindsight they did not wish to be included as a part of the study. This was only undertaken with three of the respondents due to delays in transcription. In hindsight, it would have been preferable to return to the other two respondents at a later stage, but a decision was made that significant data had already been generated for the purposes and constraints of this study.

A major limitation of the data analysis was the necessity to condense the respondent's 'I-Poem' to manage and present the data. Incorporating member checking by asking the respondent if their 'I-Poem' was representative of the original full-length version (and interview) would have strengthened the findings. Sharing my overall analysis with the respondents would also have been beneficial. On reflection, some of the narratives told by the respondents felt rehearsed in that they had considered the nature of the research topic and had prepared consciously or unconsciously what they wanted to put across and for me to hear particularly around their perceptions of their preparation for the workplace and struggles in seeking employment following graduation. This raised the issue of the respondents' underlying motivations to participate in the research and issues of generalisability of the findings- whether the findings can support wider inference beyond the study participants. However, no claims are made to the generalisability of the findings particularly given the very small sample size of the study. Rather this study has intended to begin a discussion of the need and importance of bringing about a merger between the psychosocial and structural domains to better understand the emotional impacts and experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers.

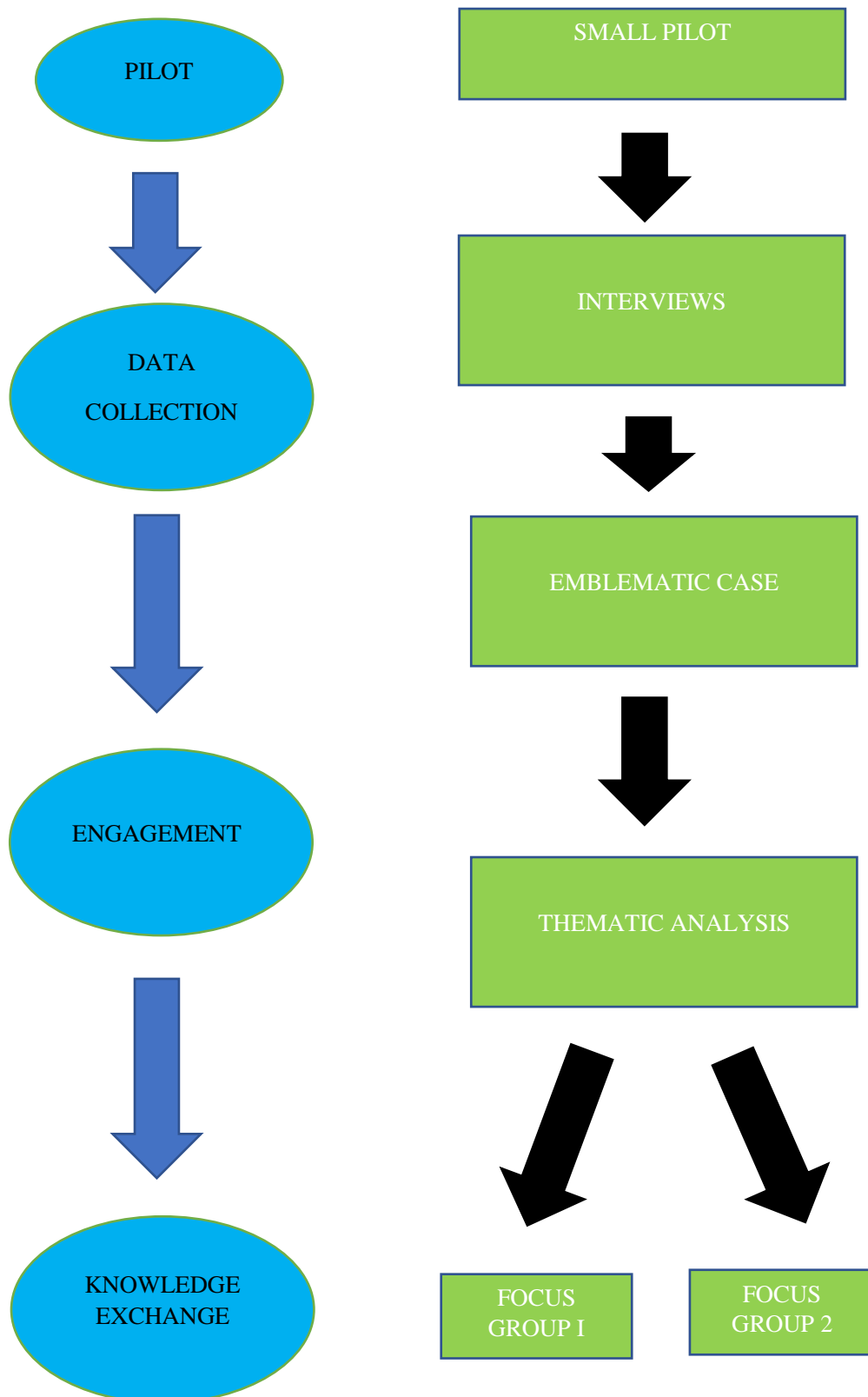
3.8 Chapter summary

The epistemological foundations of this study are located within a qualitative interpretive research paradigm as the participants' emotional experiences are the focus of this research enquiry (Silverman, 2000; D'Cruz and Jones, 2004). The method of data collection and analysis combined the voice-centred relational method with thematic analysis and was framed within a broader psychosocial research methodology (Thomson, 2007). This approach provided the best methodological fit to explore the research questions posed in this

study. The limitations of this methodology were discussed along with the influence of insider research on the co-construction of the data and findings. The importance of reflexivity was highlighted, and the ethical considerations underpinning this research were outlined.

A priority in this thesis has been to make a practice difference in the experiences of NQSWs entering the workplace by making tangible recommendations to social work educators and employers to seek ways to better support the process of transition from graduation to the workplace. The overall research approach taken pursued initial anecdotal concerns that were being raised during my role as a practice consultant in Canada through a small pilot study. The observations drawn from this pilot helped to formulate specific research questions in the English context. The data collection phase through the interview engagements led to a deep engagement with the data by utilising the voice-centred relational method and a psychosocial approach. This final phase of the overall approach led to the operationalisation of the findings into direct practice through the focus groups. This process of knowledge generation was complimented by the methodological design taken and is diagrammatically represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Methodological Approach



Chapter Four: Analysis of Findings

4.1 Introduction and overview

This Chapter presents an emblematic case from the respondents' interview data sets. Emblematic or typical cases are considered on their own to represent significant features of the phenomenon under study (Elman, Gerring and Mahoney, 2016). While undertaking readings of the transcripts and listening to the taped interviews, the case of Emily presented itself as such a case. Thus, the selected case of Emily discussed in this chapter is not itself generalised, but rather, highlights key features within this case that are identifiable in all the data sets (Alasuutari, Bickman and Brannen, 2008). A modified voice-centred relational method and psychosocial approach, as outlined in the methodology, were utilised to analyse the first and second phase interviews of the emblematic case. The aim was to explore Emily's early history and motivations to pursue social work; the role of personal dispositions and attributes; views on the level of preparation by the social work education course and the emotional experience of transition to the workplace. The first two steps of the VCRM were analysed focusing on 'the story' and 'I-Poem' within a psychosocial frame. The analysis also explored my countertransference reactions and intellectual and emotional responses to the respondent's narrative. The third and fourth steps of the VCRM which focus on highlighting the relational and contextual nature of Emily's experience were analysed within a neoliberal political frame. This approach to data analysis identified emergent themes in the findings by merging the influence of psychosocial and structural factors on individual experience; an original contribution claimed in this thesis.

Following the analysis of the emblematic case, the identified findings were further explored across all respondents' accounts by thematically analysing their condensed 'I-Poems'. These condensed 'I-Poems' were constructed from selective chronological extracts from the full interview transcripts that aligned to the research questions, and this process of abridging or data condensation is described. As outlined in the methodology, a psychoanalytically informed theoretical framework was utilised to explore the research sub-questions:

- I. What role do personal histories, individual traits and relational or organisational factors play in NQSWs' responses to their transition to the workplace?
- II. What are the subjective and emotional responses of NQSWs to the transition journey to qualified practice?
- III. What factors facilitate or hinder this process of transition?

In line with the research aims, consideration was given to what the generated findings could convey to educators and employers about understanding the relevance and significance of

Newly Qualified Social Workers' journeys to social work education, and their subsequent transition to professional practice in the workplace. I considered whether any findings revealed should shape and influence educators' approach to the design of the social work curriculum and the student learning process. I explored this by presenting the final thesis findings to practicing social workers locally in their first year of employment and engagement with the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). This knowledge exchange added a further layer to the findings by attempting to evaluate their applicability to direct social work practice. Two separate focus groups were consulted to explore the relevance and resonance of the findings, and this allowed the thesis findings to be operationalised and strengthened the final conclusions that this thesis makes. The subsequent chapter discusses these conclusions and recommendations.

4.2 Introducing the emblematic case of Emily

Emily is a white woman in her late twenties. She undertook a postgraduate qualifying social work programme within a pre-1992 higher education institution located in the Midlands. On graduation, she gained employment as a Children and Families Social Worker in a neighbourhood Children and Families team. The catchment area of this team covers a wide geographical area which includes both inner city and rural communities. Poverty and social deprivation are noteworthy characteristics amongst the families living in these constituencies.

The first interview with Emily was conducted a few weeks into her appointment and focused explicitly on her early childhood experiences, her personal dispositions and her motivations to pursue social work. The second interview was conducted six months later and expressly focused on Emily's experiences of transition to the workplace, the extent she felt prepared for practice by her educational programme, the level of satisfaction in her professional role and any challenges she currently faced. Both interviews were analysed using the voice-centred relational method informed by a psychosocial approach. In keeping with the qualitative methodology, the aim of presenting a comprehensive analysis of both the first and second phase interviews in this chapter was to explore how Emily's thoughts, feelings and circumstances changed over time.

4.3 Emily's story: analysing the phase one interview

Emily's story unfolded after asking her a few prompting questions about her early experiences of growing up and her journey towards choosing to enter a social work qualifying programme of study. The general approach I adopted throughout this interview encounter was informal and conversational and keeping with the broad principles of a free

narrative interview (Hollway and Jefferson, 2008). I guided the meeting with questions linked to broad themes related to my research questions as outlined in the previous chapter. The primary emphasis of this interview was to hear Emily's story of her early childhood experiences and her dispositions and attributes and explore how these may have influenced her towards selecting a helping profession as a vocation.

4.3.1 Reading one: the story and response

The main synopsis of Emily's story sits within several inter-linked events which she recounts: the difficult period of her life before entering social work education; the excitement and anxiety of commencing her education course and a critical view on the level of preparation by her social work education for practice. The underlying sub-plot in her story is a continuing psychological need for appraisal and validation from significant others as a valued individual.

After the completion of her undergraduate degree, Emily found herself some three years later working in jobs that she felt were not worthwhile. This period in her life was a challenging period, which she described as a crisis. Emily recounts feelings of being alone and spending long periods being upset and tearful. Deciding to pursue social work was mainly in response to where she found herself at this time and a motivation to do something useful. Her belief, and that of her mother, that social work as a vocation would allow her to contribute to the betterment of others' lives was a key motivator to enter social work education.

The social work programme was experienced as an exciting time but also extremely challenging. There is a strong theme in Emily's story of being unsatisfied with the lack of preparation by her social work programme for front-line practice. Her main criticism lies in the perception that her educators were 'out of touch' with contemporary practice. The teaching of social work in the classroom contrasted starkly in Emily's view, to the form it took in the workplace. Within Emily's story there is an underlying tone of anger as this lack of preparation, is seen to impact her emotional wellbeing:

Even on the weekend, Sunday night I'll get this- you start to feel it in the pit of your stomach, like what is going to happen this week? What's going to come in? You never know what's going to happen. So unpredictable, this job.

There is a strong sense of optimism and determination to develop a career in social work aligned with a sense of growing confidence and professionalism as a Newly Qualified Social Worker. Support is central in allowing her to do this, and this is made available through her family networks and from experienced practitioners in her team. Being considered competent by others throughout her life, and in her professional role, is highlighted in Emily's story.

There is a clear link between continually seeking the positive appraisal of others and how this relates to her own emotional and psychological wellbeing.

After listening to Emily's story on audio tape several times and reading the interview transcript, I produced written reflexive notes about my emotional and intellectual responses to what unfolded. A summary of these responses is provided below:

My emotional response

My emotional response to Emily's story is conflicted between feelings of empathy and sadness towards her struggles and anger towards her criticisms of social work education. Her quest for acknowledgement and positive appraisal resonated with my own needs for validation from others growing up. This need is rooted in my own early experiences of instability and a lack of security in my familial environment and exposure to a hostile external environment where it was difficult to feel accepted as a young Asian person. These countertransference dynamics inter-play and resonate with Emily's sense of despondency and feelings of crisis as a young adult. The projected feelings of anger towards the criticisms of her social work programme provoked countertransference dynamics related to my needs to contain and defend against my feelings of inadequacy as a social work educator and in perceptions of letting down students like Emily. These powerful emotional dynamics of the research encounter were crucial to document and articulate to make sense of how meaning-making derived from the interview was in part subjective and co-constructed.

My intellectual response

Since childhood, Emily has felt the need to please her mother who plays a crucial role in her life. She has adopted the label of a high achiever to some extent to allow her to seek her mother's approval and appraisal unconsciously. These needs may be linked to the separation of Emily's parents during her childhood and the psychological impacts of separation that this is likely to have had on Emily's sense of self and significant attachment relationships. Her experiences of victimisation as a child are also expected to have impacted on her sense of self-confidence and provoked an enduring need for safety throughout her life. An orientation towards pursuing social work may be to seek opportunities to build her sense of self, confidence and engage in something where she can make a meaningful contribution, compensating for her feelings of worthlessness.

There is a considerable degree of criticism and anger towards her social work programme for the lack of preparation for practice. While this is contradictory, when considered

against the positive experience of placement learning, these negative emotions can be interpreted as mechanisms of defence that allow her to projectively identify and eject her feelings of inadequacy towards her social work programme and educators. Associated with this is the need for a high degree of predictability and stability in her immediate environment as a means of gaining and maintaining a sense of control over her emotional and psychological state of being.

4.3.2 Reading two: participant voices

Emily's condensed 'I-Poem' (overleaf) was constructed from the full 'I-Poem' (see Appendix 4) following the data condensation process described in the methodology chapter (see page 78). Following this, an analysis of the 'voices' heard in the 'I-Poem' is provided and seeks to identify what is the nature of these voices and how Emily experiences, feels, presents and speaks about herself. The analysis also considers how she believes others see her and what emotions, reflections, opinions and intentions are evident in her narrative (Petrovic et al.; 2015).

Phase One Interview: 'I-Poem'

<p> <i>I had three years of work, I didn't feel like I was making any difference. I got really, really- not depressed, I was really alone. I was feeling like I didn't have a purpose, I would cry a lot of the time I had a conversation with my mum., we talked, I suppose I didn't really know what social workers did, I looked into it I thought I wanted to make that difference in people's lives, I'd just get really sad a lot of the time, just cry a lot of the time, I felt, I need to do something I decided I was going to go to University I loved it. It was a really great, great feeling. It was hard, it was really hard. I knew that I just had to keep going. I was becoming more informed. I had a great practice educator, she was really, really good. I definitely took on her as a role model, I always want to do the best for her [mother]. I had the expectation for her as well, my practice educator, I wanted to do well,</i> </p>	<p> <i>I wanted her to be proud of me, think "I've got a good student here." I suppose it was kind of a parallel. I do put high expectations on myself. I always do. I always want to do the best, I am a perfectionist I have done since I was at school. I always have. "I really enjoy what I'm doing when I'm doing social work," I felt like I was back to my achieving I wanted to achieve. I was proud of myself. I still sometimes feel like, I don't feel like one [professional]. I do feel like a novice. I do feel like sometimes I'm out of my depth, I really do. I didn't know what I was doing, at all. I learnt so much in that placement. It was invaluable, that placement was. If, I hadn't had that ... I would not have felt like I could have walked into a children's team. I think there needed to be more of a balance. I know people don't want to think about, you're going to have it hard- but that is what it's like. You are stressed.</i> </p>
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<p><i>I think maybe having more people who were in front line practice come and speak to us, more focus on what it's actually going to be like.</i></p> <p><i>I just feel like sometimes it was too optimistic.</i></p> <p><i>I really enjoyed it, but there's a lot of- it wasn't that realistic.</i></p> <p><i>I'd been on training, things like that</i></p> <p><i>I was taking a lot of my work home,</i></p> <p><i>I could see it was affecting my mood,</i></p> <p><i>I was snapping at people.</i></p> <p><i>I spoke to a manager about it,</i></p> <p><i>I'm not a horrible social worker,</i></p> <p><i>I have got skills,</i></p> <p><i>I have got qualities that are good.</i></p> <p><i>I think I've always been quite critical of myself.</i></p> <p><i>I've always had quite high expectations.</i></p> <p><i>I basically question everything.</i></p> <p><i>I say, "Everything about me is bad." You know what I mean? "</i></p> <p><i>I must be an awful social worker"</i></p> <p><i>I probably blow things out of proportion a little bit.</i></p> <p><i>I do like things to be right all the time, but this isn't a job where things always go right.</i></p> <p><i>I was a middle child, maybe that's got something to do with it.</i></p> <p><i>I've always just felt like I've been quite a high achiever,</i></p> <p><i>I like people thinking good of me,</i></p> <p><i>I like people being proud of me.</i></p> <p><i>I want people to think that I've done well,</i></p>	<p><i>I need to know that,</i></p> <p><i>I've never been in a job where people don't like me.</i></p> <p><i>I've never been in a job where everything about you as a profession, a lot of people hate.</i></p> <p><i>"I'm not speaking to you."</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it's that kind of thing,</i></p> <p><i>I don't know.</i></p> <p><i>I do feel valued,</i></p> <p><i>I do feel like this team is- it treats its employees well.</i></p> <p><i>I really get the emotional side of it,</i></p> <p><i>I struggle with that,</i></p> <p><i>I struggle sometimes with my emotions,</i></p> <p><i>I didn't even know really what supervision was.</i></p> <p><i>I had so many questions that I'd want to ask someone.</i></p> <p><i>I never had the opportunity to say, "Right, tell me about your day, tell me about-</i></p> <p><i>I kind of got that impression that, "Yeah, you're prepared now."</i></p> <p><i>I'm actually not at all prepared,</i></p> <p><i>I don't really know what I'm meant to expect.</i></p> <p><i>I feel like</i></p> <p><i>I don't know what I'm doing.</i></p> <p><i>I feel like there's so much to learn,</i></p> <p><i>I'm never going to know it all.</i></p> <p><i>I really just question everything about my practice</i></p>
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<p><i>I feel like, "okay, I've made a difference," but sometimes it's hard when you have such limited resources to do the things you want to do.</i></p> <p><i>I want to leave and not come back. Crawl into a hole.</i></p> <p><i>I know I want to do it,</i></p> <p><i>I know I enjoy it,</i></p> <p><i>I put up with this stress that I feel?</i></p> <p><i>I'll get this- you start to feel it in the pit of your stomach, like what is going to happen this week?</i></p> <p><i>I think for me,</i></p> <p><i>I like things when they go the right , when they are organized,</i></p> <p><i>I don't deal with crisis' s very well.</i></p> <p><i>I need to work on because I panic.</i></p> <p><i>I'm a real panicker,</i></p> <p><i>I go into like, "oh my god,"</i></p> <p><i>I need to know what's happening,</i></p> <p><i>I like things to be done in a certain order, to be planned out properly.</i></p> <p><i>I'm just a really organized person, and sometimes you just can't be organized in this job.</i></p> <p><i>I think the emotional resilience is important, because that level of unpredictability is a constant feature,</i></p> <p><i>I think that would have been quite helpful.</i></p> <p><i>I think emotional intelligence, we did like one lecture on it,</i></p> <p><i>I don't even really know what it is.</i></p> <p><i>I think there's a lot of uncertainty in our team at the moment, a lot of changes.</i></p> <p><i>I've heard maybe things about managers.</i></p>	<p><i>I don't know, maybe it has something to do with that.</i></p> <p><i>I feel this team supports me,</i></p> <p><i>I feel like I could go to most people in the team</i></p> <p><i>I think at the moment the degrees don't fully prepare you</i></p> <p><i>I can't comment on adults,</i></p> <p><i>I think with children there's a lot of work to be done in terms of making it more transferable.</i></p> <p><i>I think you need people who are doing it now, not people who did it 25 years-</i></p> <p><i>I'm not saying get rid of the lecturers and do it quickly.</i></p> <p><i>I think you need up-to-date knowledge and lecturers who are doing it now.</i></p> <p><i>I think if I'd been prepared,</i></p> <p><i>I would have been more ready for it.</i></p> <p><i>I do think having a conceptualized idea of what it's like at university doesn't transfer into practice</i></p> <p><i>I just found it one of the biggest transitions</i></p> <p><i>I just wish there was more money [resources].</i></p> <p><i>I think the profession is really poorly regarded really has a poor reputation,</i></p> <p><i>I don't think that helps anyone.</i></p> <p><i>It makes our job ten times harder.</i></p> <p><i>I tell them [families] that is not the truth it doesn't really make a difference.</i></p> <p><i>I think the profession as a whole has a poor reputation.</i></p>
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Analysing Participant Voices

Emily's 'I-Poem' reveals several senses of self, contrapuntal voices which are clearly identifiable (Edwards and Weller, 2012); senses of self that are complementary or conflicted, ambivalent or assured, optimistic or deflated, confident or self-doubting, lonely or supported. Each was perhaps voicing Emily's need for containment and containing relationships to cope with the experience of underlying anxiety as reflected in this extract from her 'I-Poem':

*I like people thinking good of me,
I like people being proud of me.
I want people to think,
I've done well.*

Emily expresses experiences and emotions of loneliness and needing support:

*I got really, really- not depressed,
I was really alone.
I was feeling
I didn't have a purpose,
I would cry a lot of the time.*

She speaks of the significance of her relationship with her mother and the need for her appraisal and validation:

*I always want to do the best for her [Mother].
I wanted her to be proud of me.*

We hear a voice of optimism and excitement about her chosen vocation, an opportunity to do something worthwhile and contribute to making the lives of others better. A profession where those significant to her can be proud of her. Equally, a voice in pursuit of perfection underscores her narrative, striving to be someone who is seen as competent, worthwhile and has value. This voice reflects a sense of self that is threatened by the instability of her external environment; littered with unpredictability and change, so lacks a sense of control and inability to bring order, thus influencing her internal psychological self:

*I like things when they go the right, when they are organised
I don't deal with crisis very well
I need to work on because I panic*

A contrapuntal voice of ambivalence is threaded throughout her 'I-Poem' which questions her ability to manage, succeed, meet the challenges that she faces in her present and those she has faced in the past. She offers herself re-assurances as attempts to seek comfort:

*I feel like
I don't know what
I'm doing.
I feel like there's so much to learn,
I'm never going to know it all.*

*I really just question everything about my practice, whereas other days
I feel like I'm doing a good job*

Finally, we hear an angry voice. Emily is critical about the level of preparation for practice that her social work course provided her. That the dis-connection of educators from the reality of practice, in her mind, did not prepare her sufficiently for what she will face and thus her course is responsible for her feelings of anxiety and discomfort of moving into the workplace.

The idea of containment as expressed by Bion, as a process of making sense of experience, can be seen to fit well with Wetherell's notion of affect as 'embodied meaning making' (2012). Thus it could be inferred that Emily's 'I-Poem' can be seen as a voiced expression of emotion and meaning making in response to attempts to deal with the containment of anxiety at certain stages in her early life and journey towards social work education that she selected, whether consciously or unconsciously, to reveal and articulate in the interview encounter.

4.3.3 Reading three: others and relationship

Three key relationships are identifiable in Emily's narrative: with her mother, the relational with her social work programme and Emily's relationship with self. Emily positions her mother as a significant attachment figure who has featured throughout her life. She presents her as someone who had protected and guided her mainly since her parents separated when she was young. She indicates that her mother was instrumental in helping her decide on social work as a vocation and that she continues to act as a significant source of support. What is noticeable in Emily's perceptions of this relationship is her need to continually seek her mother's approval to validate her sense of self. She strives towards perfection, being a high achiever, wishing to make her mother proud of what she does and who she is. A large part

of Emily's psychological and emotional sense of wellbeing is contingent on seeking and receiving her mother's acceptance and approval of her.

Throughout the narrative, there is a dialogue of Emily's internal state and sense of self with personal anxieties and her experiences of struggle. The interview commenced with open disclosures of her struggles as a young adult and feelings of loneliness and sadness. The revealing of her inner fears and anxieties runs throughout the interview engagement, confessional in nature and speaking to herself. It raises doubts about her abilities and confidence, her needs for approval and re-affirmation, her fears of losing control and being unable to adapt to change. This relationship with the inner- self-permeates the interview and reflects a relational dialogue with a vulnerable Emily speaking to an idealised Emily, something that she has continually strived to become throughout her life. There is a littering of positive self-talk, a determination to pursue social work and how she can make a meaningful contribution through this vocation.

The final relational connection in the narrative is between Emily and her social work programme. There is an over expectation on what she believes this should have provided her in preparation for the workplace. While there are moments where she concedes that her difficulties are in part due to her weakness and levels of confidence, there is a notable projection of anger towards the social work programme as letting her down. This perception represents a rationale that Emily believes is the reason why she will struggle in the workplace.

4.3.4 Reading four: socio-cultural contexts

The broad contexts that surround Emily's story, experiences and interpretation centre on familial, cultural and professional contexts. There are associations in most of her interpretations that emerge through the analysis with how she perceives her role within the family. Emily strived for positioning within the family by achieving high and has subsequently felt pressure to maintain this self-assigned role as a means of asserting her identity within the family as the interview extract below demonstrates:

I was a middle child, maybe that's got something to do with it. I've always just felt like I've been quite a high achiever, and I like people thinking good of me, I like people being proud of me. I want people to think that I've done well, so when people don't like me or don't think that I've done something right, I really hate it.

There is a close association with the assigned expectation to continually achieve and Emily's evaluation of self-worth. There have been times where she has assessed herself as not achieving, and this has manifested itself with profound emotional difficulties and sadness. This expectation permeates into her current life and entry to the workplace. The validation

she has relied upon in the past in the familial context now merges and is replicated in educational and professional contexts.

Students entering university for the first time are at a key point of developmental transition, arguably there is much to be gained from entering higher education and much to be lost. Emily speaks of deeply rooted expectations from childhood to achieve and how these are encountered in her adult life by fears of disappointing others and feelings of loneliness. She speaks of her need to be wanted, for people to be 'proud' of her achievements and of the struggle she faces to meet these deep psychological needs in the uncertain and unpredictable world of social work practice. The idealisation and excitement of entering the workplace are met with disappointment, confusion and isolation. This splitting is then enacted through projective identification and denial, perhaps seeking out scapegoats like her social work education for not fully preparing her for what was to come. Equally, Emily's vulnerabilities are met with fantasies of inferiority and humiliation and feelings of loneliness (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1993, p.18). In her voice, we hear the significance and centrality of the maternal figure and its relation to Emily's sense of self and identity. Overall, her account conjured up potential vulnerabilities and a subjectivity fraught with the fear of rejection and failure.

4.4 The defended reflexive psychosocial researcher

At this stage of the thesis, I reached what could perhaps best be described as a 'researcher's block' (Shen, 2009). I struggled to think of ways to make sense of what the 'I-Poems' revealed beyond the respondent's immediate story. Following quite an elongated period of introspection, I recognised that the intensive process of generating the 'I-Poems' as part of the VCRM, had created powerful affective impacts for me and elicited a range of emotions including sadness, frustration, empathy and anger. Some of the respondents' stories sparked resonance with my own childhood experiences of adversity and provoked deep emotions that until now had lain dormant in my unconscious. Many of the respondents' stories also echoed with my journey to social work and perhaps indicative too of the journeys of most social work educators.

Part of the struggle at this juncture in the research was trying to theorise and make cognitive sense of the powerful emotions that the respondents' stories had elicited. Eventually, I was able to unravel and interpret these emotional impacts as my countertransference responses to the respondents' stories. Theorising these dynamics of both reactive and proactive countertransference (LeFevre, 2008) within the context of the adopted psychosocial methodological design allowed for a deeper understanding of the integral role of anxiety in the human condition. Thus, anxiety produces both a defended subject and a defended

researcher (Hollway and Jefferson, 2009). Clarke and Hoggett (2009) further highlighted that emotional activity and the management of these emotions does not only take place in the research encounter but can be felt and experienced far from this. Certainly, immersing myself in the interview transcripts provoked post hoc re-valuations of myself and my past experiences. Accepting the notion of the defended researcher in the research encounter thus suggested two positions that I could have adopted concerning the respondents. I could have taken a researcher position that guarded against the risk of provoking my anxiety by the avoidance of emotional engagement with any aspects of the data. This avoidance would have then resulted in not allowing the respondents a full expression of their emotions in the interview. Alternatively, allowing an emotional engagement with the respondents meant that I had to engage in a developing understanding of the emotional impact of the research encounter upon myself and my capacities to manage and make sense of this emotion. In keeping with the overall methodological stance, the latter position as a defended researcher was recognised and adopted throughout the work.

4.5 Analysing the phase two interview

The phase two interview was held six months into Emily's entry into the workplace as a children and families social worker in a statutory team. As outlined in Chapter Four the focus of this semi-structured interview was guided by the following research sub-questions:

- I. How do NQSWs emotionally experience their transition to the workplace and what in their view supports or hinders this?
- II. To what extent do NQSWs feel their qualifying programme prepared them for their transition to the workplace?

4.5.1 Reading one: the story and response

The main synopsis in reading the second phase interview is one of internalised and externalised anxiety, stress and anger. The emotional pitch is set immediately at the start of the story with the disclosure of being stressed due to an inspection of cases in the workplace. Emily's relation and response to unpredictably is a recurrent theme and a realisation that the nature of social work itself is unpredictable, is contrary to her needs for stability and organisation as a means of self-control:

*I need to know what's happening,
I need to know when I'm doing it, when I'm going to be finished.
I like things to be done in a certain order, to be planned out properly.
I'm just a really organised person, and sometimes you just can't be organised in this job.*

Highlighted is the experience of stress and anxiety and how this is manifesting itself physiologically in poor sleep and irritability. There is an important theme of ambivalence about the professional role, concerns about how she will negotiate the demands of work with her personal life and how this job will impact her plans to have a family in the future:

*I become more irritable.
I suppose family and when I go home.
I suppose it's hard to switch off.
I suppose it affects my sleep as well.*

There is a rationalising and optimism that things will get better in the future and with developing confidence she will be better able to manage, but this contrasts to the immediate stress of the demands placed upon her. There is a connection to the lack of confidence and her experiences of victimisation and bullying throughout her primary and secondary schooling and how she is still working through the impacts of this on psychological and emotional levels. Being exposed as unworthy is an underlying embarrassment that features in Emily's life which is a fear that she holds as a core belief and one which she fears may be revealed by the current pressures she is under due to the volume of work she is required to manage.

Part of the articulation of the emotional challenges is the deep feeling of guilt of letting the children she is charged to protect down:

*I feel that my other children are getting a disservice
I don't like that feeling. Not, for me,
I don't like how that makes them feel.*

As in the first interview, there is a return to criticising her social work education as not adequately preparing her for the emotional impacts she is experiencing as a Newly Qualified Social Worker. Again, a recurring theme that runs throughout both narratives of Emily's story is the projection of painful feelings and emotions onto external objects e.g. her course. She attempts to manage the demands of the workplace by countering negative emotional disclosures with hope and optimism e.g. things will get better, I will become more confident, and I will be able to cope and make people proud.

*I think the emotional resilience is important,
I think that would have been quite helpful.
I think emotional intelligence, we did like one lecture on it,
I don't even really know what it is.*

My emotional response

Emily's story provokes an underlying empathy towards her emotional and psychological struggles. We can hear in the story a person who is struggling, perhaps someone who has always struggled and fought for a sense of confident self that is not dependent on the acknowledgement and appraisal of others. I also experienced a slight irritation that she seeks such responses, portraying herself as a child in need of comfort, as someone who is highlighting their struggles and wanting to provoke a caring response, perhaps playing the role of a victim. These latter emotions left me conflicted and probably as in the first interview with some sense of anger towards her. Emily does not assume responsibility as an adult, projecting blame to external objects, projecting blame to myself as an educator who feels uncomfortable.

My intellectual response

One way to theorise what this narrative portrays is to explore the role of control. The concept of locus of control (Rotter, 1966) is an individual's belief system to the causes of their experiences and personal attributes that they evaluate as either contributing positively or negatively to their experiences. Emily demonstrates an external locus of control in that much of her psychological wellbeing is dependent on external variables such as the validation she seeks from her family or the workplace, the need for the workplace environment to be stable and predictable. Research indicates a correlation between those individuals who exhibit an external locus of control and the experience of anxiety (Rotter, 1966; Dilmac, Hamrata and Arslan, 2009). There are also known correlations between locus of control and attachment styles.

Emily's childhood experiences of victimisation are likely to have had a profound impact on her development of self-esteem and confidence. Research studies indicate substantial consequences both immediate and long-term for victims of bullying and victimisation including loneliness and isolation (Newman et al. 2005; Gruber and Fineman, 2008). Emily linked her experiences of childhood bullying to her present lack of confidence which may demonstrate the enduring impacts of early experiences of victimisation and vulnerability on later psychological development as shown in Guerra, Williams and Sadek's study (2011) which found the strongest predictor of an increase in victimisation to be a decrease in self-esteem. Emily may have linked these early negative experiences to her motivations to pursue social work as a means of preventing others from undergoing adversities in childhood that she has endured.

4.5.2 Reading two: participant voices

Emily's condensed 'I-Poem' was constructed from the second phase interview using the VCRM and is presented overleaf. Following this, my analysis of this 'I-Poem' is presented. A summary of recurring and counter-posing themes are then outlined, analysing how Emily's emotional experiences and responses to entering the workplace changed over time.

Phase Two Interview: 'I-Poem'

<p><i>I think one of my cases is especially getting chosen as being kind of examined, so-</i></p> <p><i>I have management, "Have you done this? Have you done this?" So yeah, it's a bit, stressful-</i></p> <p><i>I obviously want to get the best but ...</i></p> <p><i>I think in terms of my professional development,</i></p> <p><i>I don't think that's ...</i></p> <p><i>I was focused on it,</i></p> <p><i>I was doing a lot of work,</i></p> <p><i>I haven't necessarily been able to do that,</i></p> <p><i>I would have wanted to,</i></p> <p><i>I've had other actual work that's sort of taken over.</i></p> <p><i>I've still honestly been trying to do it</i></p> <p><i>I see myself,</i></p> <p><i>I can still see my development going in that direction.</i></p> <p><i>I am happy,</i></p> <p><i>I really do like it.</i></p> <p><i>I am a, yeah.</i></p> <p><i>I do and so when they're not done-</i></p> <p><i>I suppose</i></p> <p><i>I become more irritable</i></p> <p><i>I suppose family and when I go home.</i></p> <p><i>I often find it,</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it's hard to switch off.</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it affects my sleep as well.</i></p> <p><i>I do feel like I have support.</i></p> <p><i>I find her really, and not just her, all the managers are very supportive</i></p>	<p><i>I do feel like I get support.</i></p> <p><i>I think it's definitely the right job for me for a period of time.</i></p> <p><i>I often think when I have children,</i></p> <p><i>I wouldn't be able to do this job,</i></p> <p><i>I wouldn't see,</i></p> <p><i>I'd see them enough; do you know what I mean?</i></p> <p><i>I don't think I'd be able to dedicate as much time to my children as I would,</i></p> <p><i>I'm not planning on having children for another five years,</i></p> <p><i>I'm moving to a flat,</i></p> <p><i>I've barely got time to even sort of fill in my paperwork to do my mortgage</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it's a combination of not being on top of things</i></p> <p><i>I would like to be.</i></p> <p><i>I haven't done before, so making sure that they're at the standard they should be.</i></p> <p><i>I am not always necessarily being able to switch off,</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it was a kind of combination of those things.</i></p> <p><i>I think they'll subside,</i></p> <p><i>I think I'll become more experienced,</i></p> <p><i>I think once I've done things,</i></p> <p><i>I think I'll become more capable</i></p> <p><i>I hope that in time I'll be able to manage my time better,</i></p> <p><i>I do struggle at times to kind make sure things are always done.</i></p> <p><i>I do hope that it would improve.</i></p> <p><i>I suppose I've always been like that.</i></p> <p><i>I've always set quite high standards for myself,</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it's my personality,</i></p> <p><i>I don't know,</i></p> <p><i>I've always done that at school, at university.</i></p>
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<p> <i>I suppose always having someone to talk to.</i> <i>I think it's supportive having examples of other people's work,</i> <i>I've never written a statement, for court before,</i> <i>I suppose it's the support verbally that you get and the emotional side of things</i> <i>I don't feel anxious about going and asking someone a question.</i> <i>I always feel like they'll give me an answer,</i> <i>I mean, my service manager</i> <i>I feel quite able to have open discussions with.</i> <i>I never spoke, quite a bit more about it,</i> <i>I am quiet</i> <i>I was a very shy person.</i> <i>I was bullied</i> <i>I was very, in my primary school and secondary school life</i> <i>I think, I don't necessarily every showed my true self</i> <i>I really, my confidence grew when I went to university,</i> <i>I think it's been a very slow, progress of my confidence being developed.</i> <i>I might feel cause I'm quite self-conscious still, shy person,</i> <i>I suppose it comes from that as well</i> <i>I suppose it's more the volume of the work.</i> <i>I've had some really busy periods</i> <i>I've just felt, "God I'm really struggling to actually keep on top of this."</i> <i>I feel more professional.</i> <i>I think when I first started,</i> <i>I don't think I necessarily felt like a professional social worker,</i> <i>I think as my confidence has grown,</i> </p>	<p> <i>I think it's made me ...</i> <i>I feel quite proud, if I tell someone that I'm a social worker,</i> <i>I know some people don't tell,</i> <i>I feel quite proud to sometimes tell them</i> <i>I think because I work so hard.</i> <i>I should be proud.</i> <i>I don't know.</i> <i>I'd say the most important thing for me was my placement</i> <i>I think they are things that you learn.</i> <i>I think it could have been done a lot better.</i> <i>I think there was, sometimes we prolonged talking about things</i> <i>I don't know, we'd kind of go over lots of things-</i> <i>I don't know if I mentioned last time,</i> <i>I think actually having more people from- practise,</i> <i>I think you kind of go into this bubble of being at uni and like you kind of come out and go, "Oh my God,</i> <i>I've got to go</i> <i>I think having more of a balance,</i> <i>I don't necessarily think that you need a huge amount of it, but having some of it would be more realistic</i> <i>I know obviously, what we talked about emotional resilience,</i> <i>I do think that wasn't talked about enough.</i> <i>I suppose it comes with the realism, that actually this job is so stressful,</i> <i>I don't necessarily think that comes across, as it should do at uni.</i> <i>I think having those more</i> <i>times spent around emotional resilience and how you manage stress</i> <i>I think that doesn't necessarily come across at uni as much as it should</i> </p>
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<p><i>I don't think until you work in it you actually understand.</i></p> <p><i>I suppose, on some level you're never going to fully understand,</i></p> <p><i>I think, there wasn't as much to do, we didn't focus enough on how ... The emotional impact of it,</i></p> <p><i>I suppose it's difficult because you have to cater for everyone.</i></p> <p><i>I suppose you question yourself..., you always have to bring it back to the child,</i></p> <p><i>I think it's a very emotive thing.</i></p> <p><i>I've got a young person whose 15 and she's really at risk of sexual exploitation</i></p> <p><i>I know it's a massive things now it is very emotive and it does make you, it can make you upset,</i></p> <p><i>I would say.</i></p> <p><i>I suppose sometimes you have to kind of like switch one side off and then move on</i></p> <p><i>I mean, 17 children, you're like all over the place sometimes in your head.</i></p> <p><i>I think what I find particularly hard is, when you have these ups and downs and peaks and troughs,</i></p> <p><i>I think, dedicating your time to maybe one or two cases, that take over.</i></p> <p><i>I feel that my other children are getting a disservice</i></p> <p><i>I don't like that feeling. Not, for me,</i></p> <p><i>I don't like how that makes them feel.</i></p> <p><i>I think some children want a lot more.</i></p> <p><i>I suppose, and actually get on with things and some parents are.</i></p> <p><i>I suppose that's been maybe their own kinds of anxieties and insecurities, they need that reassurances,</i></p> <p><i>I'd say quite a lot to be honest.</i></p> <p><i>I mean, any important decision</i></p>	<p><i>I do need more clarification about, but I'd say actually,</i></p> <p><i>I feel quite, what's the word autonomous?</i></p> <p><i>I suppose that's to do with my confidence as well,</i></p> <p><i>I think before,</i></p> <p><i>I would definitely go, "I've gotta go."</i></p> <p><i>I kinda know what the answers gonna be anyway,</i></p> <p><i>I'm fine to make that decision on my own.</i></p> <p><i>I've felt stress,</i></p> <p><i>I haven't, that hasn't led me to,</i></p> <p><i>I want to leave.</i></p> <p><i>I don't think I have.</i></p> <p><i>I think actually,</i></p> <p><i>I love what I do,</i></p> <p><i>I love the variety of it.</i></p> <p><i>I feel proud like</i></p> <p><i>I talked about, like I like that I do this job.</i></p> <p><i>I love working with the people.</i></p> <p><i>I think it's nice to have that time away from work as well.</i></p> <p><i>I find myself, being quite critical, not critical,</i></p> <p><i>I read articles</i></p> <p><i>I read things about social work,</i></p> <p><i>I think well that wouldn't have happened</i></p> <p><i>I know the processes</i></p> <p><i>I know it wouldn't necessarily happen like that.</i></p> <p><i>I had my, when did I have my graduation? January.</i></p> <p><i>I do think people are proud of me.</i></p> <p><i>I do think they're proud of me.</i></p>
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Analysing Participant Voices

The 'I Poem' lifts the depiction of several voices above the main story. An ambivalent voice, which is questioning Emily's own ability to manage and cope with the present demands of her workload. This perceived lack of opportunity to air these anxieties resulting in stressful emotions for her. Worries about how she will map out a personal life, pursue her needs to raise a family given the engrossing nature of her current role; will she be able to have a professional life alongside a personal one or will she have to forfeit one for the other.

There is also a depiction of a wounded voice, exposed to the stress and pressures of work, a voice resonant from her past which still echoes the difficulties she experienced as a child, being victimised and experiencing the separation of her parents. We hear the experience of being isolated and alone, unable to reveal her real potential and identity to others. This voice then connects to the children she works with, feelings of guilt for letting them down, not able to devote the time these children need.

These remain struggles for Emily today that she finds challenging, seeking to find a degree of competence as an individual who can stand on her own. Compartmentalising the emotional intensity of engagement with families is employed as a means of psychological defence. However, this is only a partial defence, and the emotional exposure still results in the creation of stress:

I suppose sometimes you have to kind of like switch one side off

I mean, 17 children, you're like all over the place sometimes in your head.

I find particularly hard is, when you have these ups and downs,

I feel that my other children are disservice

I don't like that feeling.

I don't like how that makes them feel.

A voice that seeks to comfort her, re-assure and rationalise that she deserves, she works hard, she tries to succeed, attempting to convince her that she is worthy. Finally, as in the first 'I-Poem', there is a return of the condemning voice; criticising the shortfalls in her course, how things could have been done better and that she could and should have been protected from the current struggles in the workplace.

4.5.3 Reading three: others and relationships

There is a clear relational connection between Emily's past, present and future senses of self, described in her narrative. Essentially the narrative reflects a discussion between Emily and herself. Stories from all three perspectives interweave as she makes conscious and unconscious connections between what she has experienced in the past and how it influences the present, and how this can determine to an extent her future. There is a link between these interweaving stories across time. A connection between the central anxieties about Emily's level of self-esteem and ability to manage the challenges that she faces when she perceives the external environment to be unpredictable and stressful. She speaks of those that are significant to her, her mother and wider family and with the children that she works. Emily positions these characters as those who do and have the potential to validate her, whether through making her family proud of her or making the lives of the children she works with better and thus meeting her needs for making worthwhile contributions.

4.5.4 Reading four: socio-cultural contexts

Throughout Emily's narrative, there is a counterposing internal dialogue between herself, contrapuntal voices of a self that are fragile and vulnerable with an audible voice that strives to be confident and optimistic. The narrative is deeply personalised and emotional, and we hear this as the dominant voice overall; drowning a voice that momentarily attempts to assert a degree of rationality and objectivity. This is reflected in the constant use of the personal pronoun 'I' which further amplifies this personalised voice:

... I often think when I have children, I wouldn't be able to do this job, because ... I wouldn't see, I don't think I'd see them enough, do you know what I mean? I don't think I'd be able to dedicate as much time to my children as I would, I'm not planning on having children for another five years, but you think about those things in your future.

The broader context which locates Emily's experience is the organisational and professional spheres. These spheres elicit an expectation to perform and present as competent and do not appear to allow emotion to be legitimately expressed, hence the dominant feature in this analysis for Emily's internalised self-talk as being competent. The immediate disclosure of stress set the pitch and framed the second research engagement which perhaps is indicative of a normative culture that exists within the workplace. In addition, the unpredictability which she so struggles to manage and become rooted in and gain a sense of control. These factors lead to experiences of stress, and this is rationalised internally as her failings and externally to those like her education course who did not provide her with adequate nurturing and preparation to stand on her own two feet.

Erikson's (1959) theory of psychosocial development provides a theorisation that Emily exhibits many features associated with his fifth stage of development- *Identity v Role Confusion*. While this stage is normatively negotiated during adolescence, there are clear indicators in Emily's narrative which suggest that she is facing a developmental crisis associated with a search for a grounded autonomous self within the professional sphere. Emily still presents as exploring her beliefs, life goals and developing a degree of trust and security in the workplace; indicative of the sixth stage of psychosocial development- *Intimacy v Isolation*.

There is a discourse of loss that punctuates the narrative which constructs Emily as having forfeited her aspirations for nurturing her own family to achieve and succeed in the workplace. What does come to mind is, what are Emily's emotional investments in positioning herself as someone who is struggling and not managing? What are the conscious and unconscious rewards for maintaining the positions that she has adopted? The ambivalence expressed of wanting her own children, but deep guilt at not being able to sufficiently provide for those that she works further raise questions about how these ambivalences are connected. Perhaps these ambivalences reflect a symbolic defensive denial of her own sense of guilt with the investments made in feeling insecure and not in control.

A question that arises when analysing this narrative with a neoliberal political lens is how far the psychological and emotional experiences Emily experiences are reflective of her psychological personality, or are socially and politically constructed within the structural context of the workplace. A workplace that has become indelibly transcribed and instituted by neoliberal ideas and ideologies as discussed in the literature review. Locating Emily's experiences within this neoliberal frame can then highlight how the processes of individualisation are prevalent; that one does well or fails to do well, i.e. Emily's struggles are deficits of her own psychological make-up, or as Harris's conceptual framework proposes a process of consumerisation i.e. that individuals are responsible for their own struggles and difficulties. What it also perhaps reflects is the diminishing spaces within the workplace for the legitimisation of emotion and the expression of vulnerability and anxiety. NQSWs perceive the interpretation of these emotions as evaluations of one's own level of competence and performance. This strand of analysis is pursued further in the discussion chapter.

It is important to note that whilst the above representations are grounded in the interview transcript text, they are also partly my reconstructions, so reflect my subjective experiences of the interview encounter; embracing the psychoanalytical notion of understanding as

depending on the ‘subjective exploration of one person by another’ (Frosh and Saville Young, 2008. P. 115).

4.6 Descriptive overview of change over time

Following the VCRM analysis of the first and second phase interviews, I thematically analysed recurring and counter-posing themes across the two interviews in my analysis to highlight how Emily's emotional state may have changed over time; from just beginning her professional role to being in the workplace for six months. This change is outlined and mapped against the research sub-questions below.

4.6.1 Research question: motivations for social work

First phase interview	Second phase interview
<p>The influence of family and the need to do something worthwhile were key drivers in the decision to pursue social work education.</p> <p>There was excitement entering the social work course and during the first two weeks of entering the workplace.</p>	<p>The underlying motivation to pursue social work as a vocation remained. The need to contribute to making the lives of other people better was an underlying motivator and orientation towards social work. Job satisfaction was felt from witnessing the positive outcomes with families through social work interventions.</p>

4.6.2 Research question: early history and role of identity and containment

First phase interview	Second phase interview
<p>There are underlying struggles with self-esteem and the need to seek validation as an individual. The early experience of instability due to family breakdown had produced enduring psychological difficulties in developing a confident and stable self-identity as an adult. Ambivalent voices of self-doubt reflect difficulties in successfully negotiating developmental crisis across important key stages of lifespan development. A clear need for containing experiences from childhood</p>	<p>The struggle with needing security and predictability are at the fore in the workplace. There is a clear need for gaining a sense of control through containment, but this is not readily available. There is a need for containment in the workplace. Deep emotional feelings associated with self-doubt and the need for security are visible and resonate with earlier childhood needs. There are tentative connections between the experiences of childhood victimisation, and the carrying</p>

through to the present time are visible. Where Emily has experienced containment from significant others, like her mother, these experiences have supported her to make positive progress in her life.	of past hurts into the present. A clear need for the workplace to provide a secure base and a relational attachment that is secure is highlighted along with a development crisis to be autonomous and accepted as a valued individual.
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4.6.3 Research question: preparation by course

First phase interview	Second phase interview
While there is a degree of contentment with the social work programme, this is overshadowed by strong criticisms about the quality of the course. There is a high level of dissatisfaction with the lack of preparation for the workplace provided by the course which may to an extent be legitimate. Given the contradictions in how the relationship with the course is evaluated; expressions of anger can best be understood as forms of projective identification; mechanism of psychological defence against her uncomfortableness over negative feeling associated with a weak appraisal of self.	The level of criticism about the lack of preparedness provided by the social work programme persists at the same intensity and tone six months later. There is an explicit link made between the experiences of stress and anxiety in the workplace and the lack of preparedness by the course.

4.6.4 Research question: transition to the workplace

First phase interview	Second phase interview
There are expressions of optimism expressed of developing a career in social work. There is an apprehensive yet considered approach to entering the workplace and developing the professional	A sense of internal struggles underscores the experience of the workplace after six months. Emily seeks the need for internal stability and control within an unpredictable and challenging external environment.

<p>social work role. There is an identification of the opportunities for support through ASYE and engaging in other developmental opportunities to consolidate the role of a Newly Qualified Social Worker.</p>	<p>The experiences of stress and anxiety are raised to the surface and have psychological and physiological consequences. There is a struggle to cope and attempts to seek comfort from rationalising these difficulties as part of individual development as a professional. There are emotions of guilt of letting down the children on her caseload as she is unable to give them the time they need due to the competing demands placed upon her. Feelings of doubt whether she will be an able mother, able to give to her children the nurturing they need when she starts a family.</p> <p>There are persecutory anxieties of being scrutinised, expected to perform and be confident which she tries to project outwards but represent an internal struggle to cope.</p> <p>There are clear connections and resonances between past and present emotional experiences; the seeking of containment as a child from significant attachment figures is now replaced with the same needs for containment in the workplace due to feelings of vulnerability.</p>
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4.7 Summary of findings

The selection of Emily as an emblematic case of all the respondents was because it most comprehensively represented key features that exist in all the respondents' accounts. The main findings from the analysis of Emily's interviews over two points in time revealed a range of insights in relation to the research sub-questions:

1. The significance of early history
2. Motivations for social work
3. Preparation by the course
4. The experience of transition to the workplace

The experience of transition is a normal pattern of psychological development across the lifespan. Where early transitions have been supported through the facilitation of containment then a more successful transition is likely to be achieved. The role of control, and whether this is located internally or externally, plays a significant part in the process of adaptation during transition. Some experiences of adversity in childhood, like Emily's experience of bullying, are likely to have enduring consequences that extend into adulthood. In addition, the facing of multiple challenges, as with Emily's experience of the early separation of her parents, is likely to have greater impacts on an individual's sense of self-esteem and confidence in their own positive appraisals of themselves. This was clearly seen as an issue in Emily's narrative where she has constantly sought out re-assurances from significant others in her life and continues to seek the same re-assurances in the workplace. These re-assurances about her emerging professional role appear to be limited and thus there is a pattern of self-doubt in her abilities and associated transition related stress six months into the workplace.

What the analysis of the emblematic case also highlights is the significance of early orientations to pursue social work and that altruistic motivations seem to be key drivers. These orientations have endured from before undertaking social work education into the workplace and provide a degree of satisfaction and reward in the role. Further exploration is needed to investigate the extent to which these underlying motivators may act to limit some of the negative emotional experiences in the workplace.

In this analysis there are explicit criticisms over a lack of confidence in the social work education programme for providing the necessary preparation for the workplace. The struggles and challenges faced in the workplace are accredited to the shortfalls in social work training. As outlined in the review of the literature, these criticisms are historically located in the profession and further consideration is needed to explore the extent to which social work education does prepare graduates for the workplace and the correlations with the experiences of anxiety and stress. Regarding this emotional transition, the emblematic case highlights the onset of a high level of stress and anxiety within a very short space of time on entry to the workplace. The early excitement and optimism of pursuing social work and entering the workplace have become overshadowed by strong emotions and feelings of stress and personal struggles. This transition-related stress does not appear to be contained within the workplace and is impinging on physiological and psychological levels. The causes of these stressors appear to be linked to the issues around performance and the expectations of managers for NQSWs to immediately perform on entry to the workplace. The managerial nature of the social work involves the turnover of high workloads and the monitoring of work

which in a very short time-frame (6 months) appears to have become unmanageable. While some of the themes highlighted in the emblematic case are more amplified in certain respondents' stories, thematic analysis across all the data sets provides a further layer to these finding, and this is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: The Respondents' Narratives of the Emotional Experience of Transition to the Workplace

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter further explores the findings from the emblematic case through an analysis across the remaining respondents' data sets. Undertaking a thematic analysis across respondents' narratives of self and the condensed 'I-Poems' (step one and two respectively of the VCRM) it explores the role of early histories, motivations for social work and the role and experience of containment in respondents' lives. This section of the analysis predominantly focuses on the first phase interviews as the focus of this semi-structured interview was on understanding the respondent's past and how they made sense of this in the present. It also explores what were considered as facilitative experiences that had helped them deal with experiences of adversity and transition in their lives. This chapter maps out the early journeys and orientations to social work of the respondents and Chapter Six focuses specifically on the emotional experience of transition to the workplace and how respondents' emotions changed over time by analysing the first and second phase interviews.

5.2 Narratives of personal history, attributes and personal dispositions

5.2.1 The significance of identity

As highlighted in the emblematic case, the role of identity presented itself as a very significant feature in the analysis of Emily's narrative. Emily spoke of multiple identities regarding the roles that she played in and outside of the family setting, either in the past or the present. A thematic analysis of the other respondents' narratives also revealed the nature of these multiple selves that they spoke from: a nurtured self, a self in the face of adversity, a self-striving for perfection and a self denied positive role models. These narrated voices can be understood as constructed contextually and relationally. The 'I-Poems' additionally revealed the 'multiple voices' the respondents spoke from: as daughters, siblings, mothers and colleagues:

[Laura]: I'm a mature studentWhen I was a little girl.....I've got three children

[Nia]: I'm married, with 3 children...I am from an African background, though a British citizen.....I migrated ... relocated I call it, not migration.....worked as a banker for 10 years.

5.2.2 Pre-education experiences

Many of the participants spoke of their previous experiences of work in various settings both in professional and manual roles. Three of the respondents were postgraduate students on entry to social work and had made significant career changes about social work as a new vocation. Three of the participants were also mothers and had spent considerable time raising their children and therefore had either sacrificed their careers, or came to a critical point whereas they wished to pursue a professional career for themselves rather than being constrained within the identity of only being a mother.

[Nia]: By the time I was ready to go back to career they said, "Oh, you've been out of banking jobs a long time. You know the rule, if you're out of banking job for 10 years, you have to go back for ... refreshing course, which I wasn't ready to do

The VCRM elevated important voices about the identities of the respondents that otherwise were likely to have remained silent. This more in-depth knowledge that students in social work education are embodiments of multiple selves, is an essential insight for educators to hold when designing learning processes. The consequence of not acknowledging the deeper complexities of students, and NQSWs', emotional and psychological and social selves runs the risk of educators unconsciously ascribing students' singular identities, as purely consumers, in the current marketised educational environment within which social work education is delivered.

5.2.3 Early experiences of adversity

Many of the respondents had shared experiences of being faced with some form of adversity in early childhood. These adversities were either on familial or societal levels, physical or psychological and included severe experiences of physical abuse and violence in the home, victimisation at school, separation and loss of parents and siblings. Sarah's experience explicitly highlighted the cruelty subjected to vulnerable children by adults. She spoke of her childhood experiences of growing up in a violent home environment and subjected to the cruelty of her carers:

*[Sarah]: My childhood was all the time we spent in our bedrooms.
We were physically chastised with belts
I remember it was a really unhappy and lonely time.*

Two of the respondents recounted positive upbringings as children and being afforded warm and loving home environments as children. They spoke about the importance of their families as they grew up as children and how these experiences orientated them towards social work; wanting to provide similar

positive experiences for the children on their caseload. These early formative experiences also played a considerable source of support and stability to counter some of the pressures of the workplace.

*[Laura]: It made me realise that not all children are as lucky
I grew up in a stable house and they [parents] remained very happy.*

5.2.4 Early experiences of containment

Three respondents articulated experiences of being supported, to deal with intolerable adversity in childhood when asked to consider their early experiences and journey towards choosing social work as a career. Sarah's 'I-Poem' most clearly voiced this and the significance of her social worker, assigned to her as an 18-year-old young mother, in providing a nurturing experience, in the absence of her emotional needs being met by her parents. Her poem reveals how this containing experience facilitated her to make a major change in the direction of her life:

Contained:

*[Sarah] I believe that social worker saved my life
He changed my life,
I think that's what shaped me as a person.
I hadn't had that nurturing from my own parents,
He was just so empathetic and just so caring*

Uncontained:

*[Sarah] I remember it was a really unhappy and lonely time.
I remember having split lips, black eyes, marks over us.
I witnessed my mom be violent most days to my stepbrother,
Putting him out when it was snowing in the nude,
Punching him, strangling him, seeing him nearly die.*

The material weaves between the psychological and the relational. Equally the role of attachment is significant, and Sarah's disclosure of abuse early in the interview shows that she placed a high degree of trust in me as the researcher.

[Rose]: When I had my 2 kids I went through a bit of crisis within my life. There's a lady who really supported me, supported me, wholly supported me and I felt very good and I thought, "Hmm, maybe I would do social work".

These narratives give snapshots of the respondents' early experiences and personal dispositions before entry to the course, the ability to thrive and benefit positively from experiences of being nurtured, and the ability to engage with and utilise a helping relationship. The accounts reflect the significance of understanding the life journey that students have been on before they get to social work education, which helps to understand what and how they need to learn and what may be the challenges and struggles for them, and how educators need to be with them.

5.2.5 Experiences of transition

Change is a constant part of life and the concept of transition can be defined as a psychological process that a person goes through in coming to terms with new situations (Bridges, 2004). These situations may be planned or unplanned and a number of variables are likely to determine how successful a transition is experienced and managed by an individual. Enabling factors may include economic and emotional security, prior transition experiences and the availability of support mechanisms. Inhibiting factors may include economic and emotional insecurity, health, hostile environments and a lack of support (Williams, 2008). Most people manage the process of transition successfully and these experiences are considered as a normative part of human growth and development.

A common theme that emerged from the thematic analysis of the narratives of personal history was the experience of transition across the lives of the respondents before their entry to social work education. A range of transitional experiences was identified broadly grouped into those that were primarily environmental or those that were more significant within the context of changing family relationships. An emerging pattern in these transitional experiences was the relationship between the levels of autonomy and control respondents perceived to hold and exercise in these situations.

Respondents who voluntarily decided to make changes to their circumstances contrasted sharply in their emotional responses to transition compared to those where change was forced upon them as observable below.

[Rose]: Also, when I came to England, I came after basically working 2 years, in my 20s, 1994. Being a Christian, because I came with a Christian family, really helped me.

Rose voluntarily came to the UK in 1994 having been sponsored by a family through her church. She lived with this family for several years and felt they provided her with the care and sense of belonging she needed to settle in the UK away from her own supportive family. In contrast, Nia was forced to leave established support systems in her home country and an established professional career and emigrated to England with her young family in the early 1990s and found it difficult to make the necessary cultural adjustments.

[Nia]: It was an experience, first of all, the cultural shock. Where you meet somebody, you know ... back home in Africa, you care about your neighbours, you look after them, you knock on their doors, "Are you okay?" You come in here and you find out that you are just alone. My experience was more of isolation and loneliness. Even when I had my two kids, but they were very young.

All respondents spoke of the experiences of relationship transitions. In these narratives, the emotional voices of struggle and pain in response to these transitional experiences was less clearly amplified but present. Sarah's story and experiences of physical and emotional abuse within the home environment which precipitated a significant change in the direction of her life most powerfully voiced this:

[Sarah]: We was physically chastised with belts and I remember it was a really unhappy and lonely time. I know people sort of say in those days to use the belt was acceptable, but I remember having split lips, black eyes, marks over us. So really, really unhappy and I remember while I was growing up thinking I can't wait till I am 16 so I can leave home..... I witnessed my mom be violent most days to my stepbrother, including putting him out when it was snowing in the nude, punching him, strangling him, seeing him nearly die.

The respondents' narratives of personal journeys before entering social work education revealed common experiences of change either within the broader environmental or familial context. Thus, a significant theme that emerged from the analysis of findings of personal history was the experience of early transitions. A further theme identified was of compassion as a personal trait that the respondents espoused and was important to them.

5.2.6 Motivations for social work

All participants re-counted their own experiences of adversity which indicated that these early childhood struggles formed a major part of the respondents' identity as adults and provided motivations to enter social work to help others where there were some resolution and containment of these experiences. In a couple of instances, these early experiences provided personal insights into the precariousness of becoming involved in certain areas of social work, e.g. child protection due to the respondent's own unresolved early childhood traumas. Some respondents had experienced for themselves the positive benefits of receiving professional social support at critical points in their lives, and this had inspired them towards social work as a vocation.

[Sarah]: I think it was the way the social worker worked with me because I think it was a relationship whereby he actually built my confidence and self-esteem.... He was just so empathetic and just so caring.

Two respondents had experienced growing up in families that were heavily involved in working with people in need, and these altruistic familial motivations had modelled their sense of wanting to care and drawn them to social work:

[Rose]: Those type of people, I always like to work with people. As I said, I've been brought up seeing my family looking after people. People who were so deprived, people who don't have anything and my family has been supporting them. It's always been part of me.

Most of the respondents spoke of a common underlying motivation in their orientation to pursue social work either as a first career, or as a change of career choice; the desire to seek a rewarding profession that allowed them to meet their needs to care for other people. This underlying motivation stemmed from either their own experiences of childhood adversity, familial influences and the modelling of altruistic values or their individual needs to seek validation through educational achievement.

5.3 Summary

The narratives of self and the 'I-Poems' provided a visceral insight into the psychological nature of the early experiences of NQSWs before their entry to social work education. Bion's (1962) concept of containment produced a useful theoretical framework within which to explore and understand the manifestation of anxiety at times when this was contained and at other times when it was not.

The use of the voice-centred relational method and a psychosocial methodological approach gave voice to the pre-experience and significance of the early dispositions of Newly Qualified Social Workers and their journeys to social work education.

The 'I-Poems' highlighted the importance of containment and that it is a process of facilitation rather than individuals necessarily having the capacity themselves to contain anxiety or not, i.e. containment is a relational process. Thus, a reasonable expectation that the educational environment into which the student enters and subsequently the workplace organisation to which they transition, should create and provide sufficient containment for NQSWs.

Despite recognising the responsibilities of the education and workplace organisations to facilitate processes of containment for its students and workers, we perhaps also need to understand that individuals who enter social work education, and then the profession, should also hold some capacity and responsibility to contain themselves. The implication is that, through the resolution of past early experiences, individuals should have internalised the process of containment, so that in the future they can recognise themselves when in the grip of strong countertransference to contain their anxiety. The further implication is that the training course and the workplace cannot be expected to do everything for the individual and that the trainee or Newly Qualified Social Worker also has their own responsibility.

Grant and Kinman's study (2013) exploring the personal representations of resilience among social workers ($n = 300$) found that English social workers described resilience typically as a dynamic interplay between their characteristics and the support that was made available to

them in the workplace. Earlier studies have also highlighted the influence of psycho-biological and psycho-social factors that underpin resilience and successful adaptation to stress (Buckner et al., 2003; Feder et al., 2009) and that early experiences of attachment and relationships are considered significant predictors of resilience in later life (Masten and Gerwartz, 2006). It is thus perhaps more constructive to recognise that developing the emotional efficacy and intelligence (Salovey et al., 2008; Carpenter et al., 2015) of NQSWs and the availability and utilisation of supports in the workplace can best ensure the psychological wellbeing of NQSWs. This emotional competence can also safeguard service users from the risks of poor practice performance (Kinman and Grant, 2011; Cooper et al., 2013; Grant and Kinman, 2014; 2017).

To conclude, the 'I-Poems' generated from the initial interviews highlighted what facilitated the containment of anxiety in the early experiences and personal dispositions of the respondents and what being 'uncontained' by a person or experience looked like. The next chapter explores NQSWs' emotional experiences of the transition to the workplace and whether the NQSW experienced the workplace environment as a facilitating 'container' or not. These considerations related to the research sub-questions that aimed to explore what factors NQSWs felt were either helpful or a hindrance in their transition to the workplace, and how positive containing experiences may be supported and developed, and what the role early history and personal disposition played within this process. The final echo from listening to respondents' voices resonates with my sense of being a social work educator. It raises questions on how far do educators, should educators, consider the experiences of students before they arrive at the course and what can these experiences reveal and then help formulate a learning and teaching approach in effectively developing these individuals as emotional social workers.

5.4 Narratives of the emotional experience of transition to the workplace

The early childhood experiences and personal dispositions of the respondents have been highlighted above through an analysis of the narratives of self and 'I-Poems' of the first phase interviews. As with the emblematic case, the findings emphasised the importance of recognising the multi-faceted nature of an individual's identity as part of the learning processes of social work education. It also highlighted the early experiences of transition and containment of the respondents and how these early experiences influenced the development of emotional self-efficacy in later life. Having mapped this initial journey of the respondents to social work education, the discussion now focuses on voicing the respondents' emotional experiences of transition to, and being in the workplace. Thus, the thematic analysis shifts to

focus on the second qualitative interviews and specifically on further analysing the relational and contextual factors identified in the emblematic case that seemingly influenced respondents' emotions and experiences.

One of the distinct themes that emerged from the second phase interview analyses was the respondents' experiences of high degrees of stress and anxiety six months into the workplace. Stress originated within the relational and contextual domains of relationships with service users and their families and the workplace environment itself. The daily exposure to a stressful work environment was mediated to a large extent by underlying feelings of compassion and responsibility to improve the lives of the children that respondents worked with; an enduring underlying attribute that featured in the respondents' personal histories as motivating them towards social work as a career.

5.4.1 The influence of relational factors on emotional experience

In this stage of the VCRM reading (reading for relationships), a focus was maintained on how the respondents spoke of the 'other,' i.e. people in their environment and the relationships between themselves and others in their environment. I was also attentive during these readings to considering who was not spoken about. It was also useful to differentiate how these relational objects were spoken about and whether they represented a positive or negative influence on the respondents' emotions.

5.4.1.1 Relationships with service users and their families

A prime cause of stress and anxiety reported by the respondents was the exposure to the raw aggression and anger of family members of the children with whom they worked. This exposure to the aggression of others had quite significant consequences for the psychological wellbeing of the respondents concerned, as opportunities for containment were lacking in the workplace. Some of the respondents questioned whether they acquired the capacity to sustain the demands of their new social worker roles against the impacts of aggression on their emotional senses; inducing fear and anxiety that was not contained in the workplace and was impacting on them physiologically and within their relationships. For example, Laura spoke of powerful feelings of hostility projected towards her by a family member of a child, and as she spoke was visibly shaken during the interview as observed in her body language:

*[Laura]: I mean she is very hostile and continues to be hostile,
We had to take the police with me,
It had a really big impact on me. It still does,
She's so hostile towards me, it does impact on me.*

The impact and exposure to this anger and aggression of others made her question whether she had the resilience to continue with the job:

*[Laura]: She was effing and blinding at me,
Telling me how useless I am.
I went home, and I said to my partner,
"I've had a horrible day I'm leaving".*

Two of the respondents spoke of feelings of vulnerability about their work with families and the anguish that they felt due to formal complaints made against them or instances of being verbally abused by family members; generating strong emotions of fear and anxiety about the role:

*[Sarah]: I've lacked confidence in my own practice.
I had a complaint put in against me.
I wasn't at fault,
You question your practice,
I done everything wrong?*

*[Emily]: They don't kind of prepare you
That people are gonna be screaming in your face,
Like right in your face. I think that does affect your emotions.*

The appraisal by respondents of the nature of relationships with service users and their families corresponded in no small degree to the emotional responses experienced. For example, some respondents talked about the difficulties in not becoming psychologically entangled in the complexity of families' lives and how this was difficult to contain given the intensity of practice. In contrast, some respondents were able to contain these dynamics by conceptualising and framing these relationships differently, by focusing on the child as a primary concern as evident by Rose's use of metaphor demonstrating a maternal obligation:

*[Rose]: I love social work.
You get your caseloads and they're like your babies.
So, you fight for them.*

5.4.1.2 Relationships with colleagues and respondents' own families

Relationships and the importance of the family was a major theme throughout the respondents' narratives, both regarding how their own family experiences motivated them to enhance the wellbeing of service users and how the family acted as a core source of support in dealing with the stress and anxieties of the professional role. Some of the respondents emphasised the importance of supportive relationships with colleagues and the team, and undoubtedly these relationships facilitated containment of some of the stresses generated in the workplace. Support was also made available from managers and through broader initiatives to support Newly Qualified Social Workers in some instances:

[Sarah]: I do feel like I have support. From my ASYE side of things, and from my management, I find her really, and not just her, all the managers are very supportive.

Rose spoke of new employees joining her workplace and expressed satisfaction that she had a role to play in supporting them:

[Rose]: We have lots of new people starting all the time so I'm having people coming to me and asking me for help, and I can actually help them, so that's quite nice.

5.4.1.3 Unspoken relationships

All the respondents spoke about the significance of contemporaneous relationships that were available to them, whether these acted positively or negatively on their emotional self. What was absent within the narratives was mention of the relational with their capacities for self-efficacy and resilience in the workplace. Equally, none of the respondents drew relational connections with learning and development from their social work educational training as personal sources of support. In hindsight, it would have been useful to challenge this omission. The narratives of self and the significant relational objects that were articulated appeared to exist mainly in the contemporary plane, and therefore there was a distinct lack of the respondents' holistic sense of self voiced beyond that of their embodied identities as Newly Qualified Social Workers searching for a degree of stability in the workplace.

The thematic analysis of these narratives considered how the respondents spoke, or indeed did not speak, of relationships of significant 'others'. The analysis demonstrated that the respondents' experiences were influenced by complex relationships on numerous levels with individuals, groups and structures. The respondents both positively and negatively spoke about the relational aspects of their work with service users. They spoke of the relationships with the team and family as core sources of support and security.

5.4.2 The influence of contextual factors on emotional experience

The final stage of the VCRM reading (reading for cultural contexts and social structures) located the respondents' narratives within the broader social, political, cultural and structural contexts. There was a major focus on how respondents spoke of the impact of the work and the cultural context of the workplace on their emotions as part of the thematic analysis.

5.4.2.1 Managing high workloads and time constraints

A dominant theme across all the respondents' narratives was the stress invoked by high workloads and the related time pressures. The respondents had seen a gradual acceleration in their workloads over a short period, and this had created the feeling of being overwhelmed

as respondents were still orientating themselves to the professional role and developing their confidence to make decisions and take actions autonomously in their casework:

[Sarah]: My caseload is quite heavy. When I started and now, the stress level is significantly higher. I'm definitely feeling quite mentally exhausted.

5.4.2.2 Performance monitoring and scrutiny

Emily spoke of the pressures of being inspected by Ofsted and ensuring that her case records were complete and the anxieties this provoked:

[Emily]: It's hard to switch off at the weekends and the evenings, especially at the moment like you say Ofsted, so we're getting emails like all through the night and stuff. And I mean I don't have to check them, but like I got up at half five this morning and I was working for three hours at home before I've come into work

[Laura]: So you're always thinking, "Okay am I doing this right?" You need some extra support with things. It gets really stressful not knowing it's right.

A respondent spoke of the daunting experience of having to attend court and being questioned by the defence barrister and how these types of experiences of being scrutinised were fearful and the respondent felt unprepared for this aspect of the work:

Emily: I was given a very complex and had to go to court. It was a really scary experience for me and I found that quite difficult as well, because her solicitor again, when he was questioning me, was very concentrated on the fact that I was new. And he kept saying "oh, well you're new and you've got no experience, and you don't know what you're talking about, this is the first time you've ever been to court.

5.4.2.3 Bureaucracy and proceduralisation

As identified in the emblematic case, the respondents also spoke about broader issues which they felt were creating impacts on their work. These expressions were reflective of the bureaucratised and proceduralised workplace which imposed specific pressures and constraints on the respondents.

5.4.2.4 Impacts of austerity and limited resources

Respondents acknowledged the influence of broader contextual issues on their emotional responses in the workplace. The exposure to the detrimental impact of austerity measures on service users' lives, resulting in significant hardship for families was difficult to ignore:

[Sarah]: Some families don't even have the basics. No food, no heating, no hot water.....no anything. I am working with one mum just trying to get the cupboards fixed in the kitchen as they are hanging off, so she can begin to start cooking for her kids. I really struggle with that. With what people are going

through and how they are suffering because of the cuts to their benefits. It's really difficult to bear.

Many of the respondents acknowledged the contexts of many service users' lives and related empathically to their despair and feelings of isolation. These contexts of practice invoked powerful emotions of the respondents that were either acknowledged or compartmentalised but, in both instances, created emotional struggles for the respondents:

[Nia]: I'm finding that because a lot of clients we work with are feeling lonely, and really are abandoned, and have no social supports. It's been also kind of difficult coming home, and not thinking about that, because we are in a caring profession.

The above analysis identified themes across the respondents' narratives of the contextual factors that appeared to influence their ways of working. These included considering how the workplace and the broader social structure featured in the respondents' narratives and meaning-making of the emotional experiences of their roles.

5.5 Perceptions on the level of preparedness by social work education

There were different perceptions among the respondents on how far they felt their social work education had prepared them for the workplace. Three key themes emerged across the data set concerning this consideration. Some of the respondents were strongly of the view that they were insufficiently prepared for the realities of practice:

[Nia]: I've reflected back on my education at university and I don't really feel that it gave me a true reflection of what the job role involves. I just don't think it was specific enough.

[Emily]: They don't kind of prepare you that people are gonna be screaming in your face, like right in your face. I think that does affect your emotions.

As seen in the emblematic case of Emily, similar sentiments were expressed when she spoke poignantly about the extent she perceived her social work education had prepared her for the realities of practice and that it had failed to provide her with the necessary skills to undertake the job:

*[Emily]: I've reflected back on my education at university and I don't really feel that it gave me a true reflection of what the job role involves. I just don't think it was specific enough.
When I came to practice, I had no idea what a strategy decision was, I feel like I should've known. I certainly felt that I was just completely out of my depth and I really didn't know what I was doing. I didn't feel sufficiently prepared at all.*

Other respondents strongly voiced contrasting perceptions of being prepared and that the responsibility of being ready for practice was not solely that of the university and that it was

necessary for individuals to have the ability to separate work from home life by applying skills in emotional intelligence:

[Sarah]: I must admit that I feel I was prepared you know. We know it's a tough job and I think for me you've got to be emotionally intelligent, to be successful. I separate my family life from my work life.

The respondents' narratives of self about the emotional experiences of transition to the workplace were again analysed thematically within the context of the significant relationships they either spoke about or did not mention.

5.6 Compassion as an underlying motivator

In contrast to the above emotional impacts and responses to the work and relationships with service users and their families, a common theme of compassion and care emerged from the analyses of the interview data sets. This suggests that despite the negative experiences in the workplace that cause stress and anxiety, the underlying motivations of why the respondents entered social work remained resolute and to a degree counteracted the appraisal of these negative experiences:

*[Sarah]: I'm so passionate about making a difference,
I see what it's like for these families
That's what keeps me going,
That's why I came in to do social work.*

Many of the respondents expressed a sense of satisfaction when seeing changes in the lives of service users that they were working with:

[Laura]: Now I go and they're like "hi [Laura]", and they hold my hand and show me their bedroom. Talking to me about things they've done with dad. You know, you speak to school and they say how well they're doing. That feels good. It kind of makes me think why I went into social work.

These subjective experiences of achievement concur with research by the charitable group IRISS in 2015 to understand the experiences of social care workers across Scotland, and found that workers experienced a sense of joy when witnessing service users that they worked with achieving outcomes.

5.7 Summary overview of findings

The analysis of the emblematic case identified several key findings that were further explored by undertaking a thematic analysis of the remaining data sets. These findings are summarised below concerning the main research questions of this thesis.

5.7.1 The role of personal histories and individual traits

The findings on the role of early experiences of life transitions show that where a respondent was able to exercise a degree of control in the transition process, then a more successful transition was experienced when dealing with change. The nature of control is a significant factor correlated with emotional wellbeing in research on transition (Szymanski, 1994; Heckhausen and Schulz, 1995; Heckhausen, 1999) and needs further investigation concerning NQSWs' transition to the workplace. Equally, the availability of opportunities for the facilitation of emotional containment of early childhood difficulties led to positive outcomes for respondents. Thus, both the locus of control exercised and the provision of containing opportunities are essential considerations when considering how to support the process of transition of NQSWs to the workplace.

A further finding revealed that the underlying orientations towards pursuing social work were based on altruistic motivations. Feelings of compassion featured as a key personality trait that acted as a motivating driver. Many of the respondents expressed a sense of satisfaction when seeing changes in the lives of service users on their caseloads. The need to care for others and alleviate their suffering was either influenced by a respondent's own positive experiences of themselves being cared for as a child or arising from the experiences of a lack of care, or victimisation.

Social work seems to attract 'wounded healers' into the profession (Straussner et al. 2018) and educators need to evaluate how sufficiently they support or help guide the learning processes of students, taking account of their personal histories, as they enter social work education. The question that needs to be addressed for educators is what they do with these early experiences of students as part of the educational process, and how these experiences can be facilitated as part of supporting the emergence of resilient professional identities. These findings suggest that the underlying orientations to social work endure over time and have the potential to ameliorate some of the experiences of stress and anxiety, and therefore need to be better understood and promoted as part of social work education and a positive framing of the profession. The findings suggest that there are elements of NQSWs' early histories that require further investigation as to their significance in the contemporary emotional experiences of transition to the workplace.

5.7.2 The emotional experience of transition to the workplace

There were common experiences of stress and anxiety highlighted which left the respondents feeling mentally and physically exhausted. The stressors identified in the workplace were linked to the high workload demands placed upon the respondents in a relatively short space

of time. The stress of managing the tension between the expectations held by managers about respondents' abilities to immediately perform the professional role, and respondents' lack of confidence in this, led to anxieties about making mistakes.

When mapping the changes in emotions over time, the first phase interviews spoke of being nurtured and held through containing experiences in several of the accounts and the second phase interviews in the workplace clearly show less containment in the face of hostility and aggression. The differences in emotional experiences highlighted within these interviews raises key questions on the longer-term consequences for psychological wellbeing of the NQSW and why these impacts within the workplace are not ameliorated given respondents are approximately six months into their career as a professional social worker. Discussion of the workplace's apparent inability to contain emotion will be considered in the next chapter in light of the literature.

5.7.3 The level of educational preparation for the workplace

Differing perceptions were reported by the respondents on the extent to which they felt their social work education programme prepared them for the professional social work role. Some respondents reported that they were well prepared for realities of practice, while others quite strongly voiced that they were not, and that there were significant shortfalls in their training. This latter set of respondents articulated that they should have been provided with more opportunities to be introduced to the realities of practice, for example how to deal with conflict and aggression. Those respondents who felt adequately prepared, voiced that an individual's level of resilience was more significant in coping with workplace pressures rather than the issue of preparedness by their course.

The findings suggest that respondents were presented with too much unpredictability to successfully adapt on a psychosocial level in the transition to the workplace. This unpredictability was increased by the immediacy of expectations to perform on entry to the workplace and to make the transition from a graduate to a professional social worker in a short space of time. More significantly the presentation of differing concepts of social work to respondents as part of their social work education contrasted starkly with the conceptualisation of social work in the workplace. The review of the literature has highlighted that the existence of these two contrasting conceptualisations of social work are located within historical tensions and conflicts about defining the role and purpose of social work. What does not appear to be acknowledged is how these contested views of social work held by the Academy and employers are playing out on the emotional experiences of NQSWs during the transitional process from the university to the workplace.

5.7.4 Mechanisms that supported and hindered the transition to the workplace

The respondents identified several supports that they felt enabled them to deal with some of the transition-related stresses they experienced. Relationships with family members were emotionally experienced as positive and as a primary source of support. Respondents spoke of the primacy of informal supports provided by their peers and the key role of the family as a 'safe haven' to which they could retreat. There were a few instances where more formalised support from managers was valued. Conversely, respondents generally reported fractious and hostile relationships with service users' family members.

The main hindrance in the transition experience reported by respondents was feelings of stress caused by managing their caseloads. They reported that whilst the issue was not regarding the number of cases they were allocated, it was the associated expectations to manage these cases with minimal support of guidance that generated anxiety. This perception in the workplace that the respondents were fully equipped to practice placed a high degree of responsibility on them to work with ambiguity and complexity very early on in their transition to the workplace. The culmination of expectations and the pressures of complex cases led the respondents to feel stressed and anxious and not able to seek support from their managers.

5.8 Knowledge transfer and exchange

A key objective of this thesis is to influence changes in social work education and the workplace context so that educators and employers more proactively understand and contribute to supporting the transition of Newly Qualified Social Workers into the workplace upon graduation. Thus, to add a further layer to the findings, two focus groups were set up to support the knowledge transfer and exchange of the findings to social work practitioners. I liaised with the coordinator of a local Assessed and Supported Year in Employment programme and arranged meetings with two separate groups of NQSWs working in children and families teams. The first focus group was made up of four social workers who were nearing the end of their first year of professional practice on the ASYE programme. A separate focus group was made up of ten NQSWs who were at the beginning of the ASYE programme. The consultations with these two groups aimed to explore what resonance, if any, the findings from the thesis had within the broader field of social work practice.

5.8.1 Consultation with focus group towards end of the first year in the practice

Providing the focus group with a summary of the thesis findings immediately sparked resonances with this group of NQSWs. The discussion centred on three main themes; performance related pressures, workload and support. While the findings on the experiences

of the respondents were acknowledged, members in this focus group individualised the discussion to their own experiences, and there appeared to be evident temporal proximity between the emotional experiences of the study respondents and the members of this focus group.

5.8.1.1 Performance expectations and workload

There was a voicing of two contrasting views on performance expectations by the group. While all members agreed that they felt a high degree of anxiety in the workplace, particularly on entry, the causes of this were perceived to stem from various sources. Some members felt that as they were now not protected as students, there were natural feelings of anxiety as they adjusted to the new workplace environment and professional role. Managers in these instances had played a pivotal role in supporting the NQSW through the gradual distribution of workload and understanding that support was required to help them establish professionally in the workplace. These experiences contrasted sharply with those who felt the pressures to perform, and the allocated workload was too high:

Expectation and workload are massive. It's that high that we cannot get ASYE done, you have to prioritise your caseload and cannot get ASYE done because I have not got the time. I go home, and I am physically exhausted. When I was studying, I could work until 2 o'clock in the morning, but I can't do that anymore. You work late, but you are drained, it is too high.

These NQSWs felt that their workload was manageable at the beginning when they entered the workplace but built up very quickly. These pressures were not just arising from a high allocated caseload but also from having to complete simultaneously the requirements for the ASYE itself. The group questioned whether the ASYE programme had unintended consequences as it felt like they were being assessed, albeit discreetly. The idea of the ASYE programme is about supporting and giving NQSWs the right tools to do the job and a gradual progression in learning and development. The ASYE may be creating additional pressures and stresses that inhibit NQSWs to experience what it intends to achieve. There was a general acknowledgement of an imbalance between the expectations to perform and managing high caseloads and the actual support provided to undertake this. Supervision was seen as pivotal in helping to allay generated anxieties, and the NQSWs stated that what was required was not just management of casework but also guidance and support on how to undertake particular tasks. That supervision should provide a space where NQSWs could articulate their struggles:

Trying to fit in supervision with my manager is a nightmare. It's not his fault cause I know he's got his pressures. I get 50 emails a day, can you imagine a manager who is managing some, how many other staff, its about understanding

his pressures as well, but at the same time I do need support and not just to say I've done this for my case and I've done that for my case but at this moment I feel like I'm drowning.

All the focus group members were reluctant to blame their managers for the lack of support provided, acknowledging that they had their own pressures to deal with and that it was the environment of the workplace itself that was stressful:

Sometimes you want to complain but who would you complain to as your manager is doing their best. Not about putting the finger on a particular person, it's just how it is, and you have to deal with it.

The workplace-related stresses were having an impact on the personal lives of some the NQSWs, and several examples of this were cited:

You come into this to help children and families to the detriment of your own. If we are working late at night where's that family time. I have got two young children, and it is really hard. Really hard...

The members of this focus group, to a large extent, supported the findings of the thesis although there were some divergences in opinion and experience as highlighted above.

5.8.2 Consultation with focus group at beginning of first year of practice

This group of NQSWs were at the beginning of their first year in the workplace and were supported by a new initiative that provides a highly supportive network and framework around them. The NQSWs were located in a learning academy for part of the week supported by social workers and then gradually introduced to a front-line team setting. This three-month 'incubation' period is designed to gradually introduce NQSWs to practice in a structured way. This initiative is in response to the acknowledgement of the high rates of turnover of new staff in the local authority and the implications this has for the management of resources. All members in this group spoke highly of the learning academy as a very supportive learning environment that offered them a high degree of support as they edged their way into front-line practice. The learning academy was experienced as a safe learning environment and a secure base from which to develop a sense of confidence and also specific skills necessary for direct practice. Members were aware of the experiences of their peers outside of this academy and the struggles that they were experiencing very early in practice.

With this group of NQSWs, the findings on preparedness by the social work course strongly concurred with this group's perception. The recurrent themes that the social work programme did not prepare them for the realities of practice were voiced, and that not enough opportunity was provided for developing specific skills that were seen as necessary for undertaking practice in the workplace. As with the findings from the thesis, the emphasis on skills

development through practice placement components of social work education were not highlighted. This may suggest a disconnect between the academic taught and practice components of social work education and that students are not making links between how these components are integrated, or indeed, there is an actual mismatch between the academic and practice nexus in the current social work curriculum.

Perhaps what these experiences also reveal is how the provision of a structured and supported workplace environment can act as a secure base and thus support the transition of NQSWs to the practice in a much more constructive way. Initiatives like 'the learning academy' can act as a bridge between graduation and an introduction to the professional social work role and is an initiative that warrants further investigation.

From the broader discussions with both groups about the workplace, key insights about the structure of the environment were gained. There was an acknowledgement that some of the systems that support practice are dysfunctional and what managers try and do is make NQSWs cope and manage in what is seen as an unmanageable and dysfunctional system. Whilst on entry to the workplace, the NQSWs were encouraged by their managers to express their feelings, as time progressed, there was a sense if it was actually safe to do so. The fear was that the expression of emotions associated with struggle could make others think that an NQSW should be able to cope with high caseloads and that not managing was an individual weakness. There was agreement that managing high caseloads was unrealistic and it prevented NQSWs from doing social work. This suggests that social work organisations have inadvertently created workplace cultures that associate the inability to manage unrealistic workloads as an individual performance concern. This needs to be addressed by the profession because it presents risks to NQSWs' wellbeing, the potential for poor practice performance, and risks to service users. These workplace cultures based on performativity also contribute to the serious issues of staff retention the profession presently faces.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter has presented findings on the significance of the respondents' journey to social work education and the significance of their early personal experiences. The key learning from these findings is that both educators and employers need to understand the life journey that people have been on before they get to social work education. The chapter also described the emotional experience of transition to, and being in, the workplace and the influence of relational and contextual factors that shaped these emotional responses. The thematic analysis across all the generated data sets strengthened the findings of the emblematic case, and the significant themes that were common to all the respondents' narratives were

presented to two focus groups of practitioners. Overall the respondents' accounts provide a balance of emotions, reflections, opinions and intentions. These cross-cutting themes, drawn together from the five study participants are next generalised and conceptualised regarding the existing literature and discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter Six: Discussion of Findings

6.1 Overview

Chapter Five undertook a thematic analysis of the respondents' narratives to further explore the identified key themes in the emblematic case. This chapter highlights the significant themes that emerged from these findings, and these are brought together to summarise how the respondents described their emotional experiences of transition to the workplace from graduation to their first professional social work role. These findings are discussed in relation to the existing literature and interrogate the research questions of this study. The discussion merges the findings on the psychosocial domains of emotional experience with the structural issues identified in the workplace. It is organised around the four inter-related key themes that this study aimed to explore:

1. The emotional experience of transition to the workplace.
2. The role of personal history and traits on the experience of transition.
3. Identifiable supports and hindrances in the transition to the workplace.
4. The role of organisational factors on the respondents' response to the transition.

The questions raised by the findings are explored, and the implications for the practice of social work employers and educators outlined. The discussion also considers whether identifiable patterns emerge from the findings.

6.2 The emotional experience of transition to the workplace

6.2.1 Relationships as major sites for emotion

While there are commonalities and divergences between the respondents' experiences, a recurring theme in the findings was the role of relationships as 'sites' for the generation of emotion (Morrison, 2006). The key relationships highlighted by respondents were those with service users and their families, respondents' own families, managers and the work itself. These relational encounters generated significant emotions which were experienced by the respondents as emotionally containing, threatening or anxiety and stress provoking.

6.2.1.1 Relationships with service users and their families

The review of the literature in Chapter Two discussed the increasing emotional intensity of front-line practice and the risks of psychological impact for social workers (Howe, 2008; Munro, 2011). The respondents experienced many relationships with service users and their family members as fractious and emotionally demanding. The increasing nature of constrained and hostile relationships between social workers and families is likely to be linked to the overly procedural and compliance-based systems within which the respondents

were working (Smith et al., 2017). The consequences of exposure to these highly emotive relational encounters have not only profound consequences for social workers but also service users. As identified in the literature review, Ferguson has extensively researched social work practice and highlighted how social workers can become overwhelmed by the intensity of practice in complex situations where the working atmosphere is hostile. Defence mechanisms such as disassociation are common in such situations and leave practitioners less able to assess risks to others, such as vulnerable children (Ferguson, 2017).

6.2.1.2 Respondents' own families and work colleagues

Respondents spoke of the primacy of informal supports provided by their work colleagues and the key role of the family as a 'safe haven' to which they could retreat. There were a few instances where more formalised support from managers was valued. These informal work and family relationships provided a secure base (Bowlby, 1988) for the respondents and allowed them to ameliorate some of the experiences of stress. These findings concur with a recent study by the British Association of Social Workers (BASW) exploring the working conditions of social workers across the UK which concluded that while conditions were reported as poor, the one exception was peer support that social workers in the study received from colleagues (Ravalier, 2017).

6.2.1.3 Relationships with the workload

The previous chapter identified common themes among the respondents' descriptions of their emotional experience of transition to the workplace. One significant theme that emerged was the experience of stress and anxiety resulting from high caseloads, which left respondents feeling mentally and physically exhausted. This transition-related stress was reported as originating from the high demands placed upon the respondents concerning workload in a relatively short period. They also reported the stress of managing the tension between the expectations held by managers about their abilities to immediately perform in the professional role and their lack of confidence in this, leading to anxieties about making mistakes.

These findings reflect the literature on the experiences of stress and burnout of early career social workers identified earlier as part of the literature review (Coyle et al., 2005). As part of the stress factors identified by McFadden, Campbell, and Taylor (2014) in their systematic review of 65 studies, high caseloads, individual coping abilities, and organisational cultures were identified. Expectations around performance and monitoring are key features of the managerialist workplace that dominates social work; a process of neoliberalisation as outlined earlier (Rogowski, 2011; Harris, 2014).

6.2.1.4 Relationships with managers

Many respondents in this study felt unable to seek support from managers in case this was interpreted as a lack of competence on their part, reflecting the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace. As mentioned earlier, one main difficulty articulated by the respondents was feelings of stress caused by managing their caseloads. The number of cases was not particularly highlighted as problematic, as respondents felt caseloads were protected as part of their engagement with ASYE; it was the implicit expectations they felt, to autonomously administer these cases with little or no guidance that caused them anxiety. This perception in the workplace that the respondents were fully equipped to practice placed a high degree of responsibility on them to work with ambiguity and complexity very early on in their transition to the workplace. The culmination of expectations and the pressures of complex cases led the respondents to feel stressed and anxious and not able to seek support from their managers. This expectation reflects findings by Stanley et al. (2012) whereby over half of the sample of social workers who experienced burnout did not approach their managers for support in case they were perceived as not coping.

These expectations to perform on immediate entry to the workplace reflect the current polarisation of views on education between employers and educators. Moriarty et al. (2011) highlights the differing perceptions of the outcomes of social work education held by employers and educators whereby educators see social work education as a transitional phase in becoming a professional social worker, contrasted with employers' views of education being an 'end product' and NQSWs should be equipped with the practical skills to perform the tasks of social work immediately on entry to the workplace. These pressures to perform were further compounded by the bureaucratised nature of the workplace and the additional stresses that this placed on the respondents to ensure that agency and procedural requirements were adhered to.

The role of relational factors, whether regarding relationships in the workplace or relational connections with the workload, is likely to have impacted adversely and contributed to the respondents' emotional experiences of stress on the transition to the workplace. It is important to recognise that social workers are working in increasingly challenging work environments which are impacted by resourcing constraints and frequent changes in the organisational structures and changing team membership (See Moriarty, Baginsky and Manthorpe 2015 for a review) and these broader factors will also have influenced the emotional experience of transition.

6.2.2 The impact of stress

The psychological response to stressors, whether negative or positive invoke changes to the hormonal systems of the body to trigger the body to take some form of action, generally referred to as the 'fight or flight' response (Seyle, 1980; Yaribeygi et al., 2017). Whilst these psychological changes to arousal are designed to be adaptive to deal with the short-term demands placed on individuals, these changes can become more problematic if prolonged, resulting in a variety of psychosomatic symptoms such as sleep disruption, muscle tensions, and tiredness (Chandola, Heraclides and Kumari 2010 cited in Biggart et al., 2016). These known psychosomatic symptoms were experienced by respondents' as reactions to stress, mainly resulting from the fractious and confrontational nature of some relationships between the respondents and family members of service users. Previous research by Munro (2011) also identified the psychological impact on front-line workers arising from this type of emotional intensity in social work.

The identifiable stressors of role demand and relationships observed in respondents' experiences of transition are consistent with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2007) summarised findings on stress research. However, what is notably absent in these emotional responses was the respondents' expressions of optimism and excitement they had articulated on anticipation of entering the workplace during the first phase interviews. Highly motivated expressions and positive feelings of anticipation of entering the workplace were replaced by being overwhelmed and stressed approximately six months into practice. This suggests that the transition of respondents to their first professional role in the workplace is a very significant event which invokes a range of transition-related stressors and this view concurs with Delaney's (2003) findings that the transition from being a university student to a professional, places considerable pressure, responsibilities and changed expectations upon individuals.

6.2.2.1 The consequences of transition-related stress

These experiences of transition-related stress early in practice are significant concerns when considering the literature that highlights the rates of anxiety among early career social workers are higher than other related professions (Lloyd, King and Chenoworth, 2002; Kinman, 2012). The average working life of a social worker is eight years, half that of similar emotionally demanding professions like nursing (Curtis, 2010). The risk of job-related stress and burnout continues to remain high for early career social workers. Travis et al. (2015) highlight that while no definitive statistics exist on the prevalence rates of stress and burnout

in social work, findings from previous studies suggest that social workers are prone to experiencing both (Lloyd et al., 2002; Arrington, 2008).

The experience of stress is a natural reaction to changes and demands in the environment, both on physiological and psychological levels. Individuals usually thrive when they can manage the requirements imposed upon them but are more likely to struggle when the presenting demands exceed their abilities and capacities to cope. Thus, given the rates of stress and burnout, the critical question that arose in this study was under what circumstances and at what point does the self-capacities of NQSWs to thrive, or even survive, within the workplace collapse? Is the inability to cope and self-contain provoked by a singular critical event or is it a cumulative response to the exposure, over time, of managing considerable workload pressures? This study suggests that the excessive performance demands made on the respondents, in a relatively short period on entry to an intense workplace environment with limited skills and resources, leads to the exacerbation of stress and anxiety.

A recent evaluation of the fast-track Step Up to Social Work qualifying programme found around a quarter of the study sample made up of graduates from this programme, and traditional degree courses reported high degrees of role conflict. Concerningly approximately a third of this sample was experiencing clinical levels of stress (Smith, 2018, p.33). The experience of stress may then be considered an inevitable occupational hazard for some NQSWs and the experience of burnout and/ or leaving the profession merely a question of time. Indeed, the impacts of stress on workforce retention and consequently services are becoming very worrying (LGA, 2009). The 2017 children's workforce statistics reveal the turnover rate (defined as the number of leavers divided by the number of workers) was 15% (DfE, 2018). Whilst this has been a consistent rate reported over several years for children social workers (DfE, 2014), problems with staff retention have now also extended to adults' social work with the turnover rates among adult social workers increasing last year to 16% which represents one in six social workers in English council adults' services departments resigning or changing jobs (NHS Digital, 2017).

Employers do make attempts to facilitate the transition of NQSWs to the workplace through structured programmes like the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). The evaluation of the ASYE Programme in 2015 reported that respondents rated the on-going training and opportunities to learn new skills this programme provided as positive. However, there was a high degree of uncomfortableness reported in dealing with uncertainty and change and managing the emotional stresses of the job, and in avoiding becoming overwhelmed by the demands of the new role (Bailey and Sach, 2015).

These findings would suggest that employers need to consider NQSWs' experiences of transition-related stress broader than an individuals' coping style and to acknowledge the wider structural dimensions that influence their experience. Employers need to consider the nature of ongoing training, creating constructive organisational cultures, providing supportive social networks and supervision in the workplace and manageable workloads (Beddoe, Davys and Adamson, 2014). These structural imperatives which can produce more conducive organisational workplace cultures to support the transition of respondents are considered later in this chapter.

6.2.3 A psychosocial understanding of the experience of transition stress

6.2.3.1 The unpredictability of the workplace environment

One way to conceptualise respondents' attempts at adaptation to the workplace is to consider their emotional experiences within a psychosocial understanding of transition. Erickson's psychoanalytical theory of identity and psychosocial development is considered a critical understanding of psychosocial transition across the lifespan (1950). He highlighted eight important developmental stages in his theory from infancy to adulthood and that during each phase individuals experience a psychosocial crisis which they are required to resolve, and this could have positive or negative outcomes for personality development (Erickson, 1963; 1970).

Alongside psychosocial crises as suggested by Erickson, individuals may face major situational crises brought about by planned (voluntary) or unplanned (involuntary) events like starting a new job or the unexpected bereavement of a loved one. Thus, both developmental and situational transitional experiences can create crises that require responses as a reaction to both planned and unplanned events. Schlossberg's well-established theory of transition usefully defines transition in this context:

‘A transition can be said to occur if an event or non-event results in a change in assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one’s behaviour and relationships’
(Schlossberg, 1981, p.5)

As discussed in the literature review, Bowlby theorised that self-containment and self-efficacy are correlated to early attachment experiences and the availability of a secure base in shaping an individual's internal working model (Bowlby, 1973; Purnell, 2004). Parkes (1971) extended Bowlby's concept of the internal working model, describing the inner world of the individual as an 'assumptive world' and that threats to this assumptive world brought about by change could lead to feelings of disorientation and resistance if the assumptive world was unable or unwilling to adapt.

Conceptualising the respondents' experiences of transition-related stress as part of a process of psychosocial transition reveals that respondents needed to make major revisions in response to external changes brought on by this significant change event. Parkes (2010) argues that to establish a new order and stability; there is a need for new meaning and new predictability both in the inner and outer environment. A successful transition from the role of a student to a professional in the workplace thus requires a respondent's inner and outer worlds to accommodate these shifts in identity and role.

It is recognised within the literature that adaptation to transition is a complex and multi-faceted process (Berry et al., 2006). Nancy Schlossberg's model for analysing human adaptation to transition highlights that 'it is not the transition itself that is of primary importance but more so how the transition fits with the individual's stage, situation and characteristics at the time of transition' (Schlossberg, 1981, p.5). Thus, different variables will have varying salience depending on the nature of the transition and the individual. Her model postulated that three significant sets of factors influence transition: (1) the characteristics of the transition, (2) the characteristics of the pre and post-transition environments and (3) the characteristics of the individual experiencing the transition. The success or failure of the adaptation to the transition is determined by the nature of the interactions between these three sets of factors.

Beyond the characteristics of the transitions outlined above, the stark contrasts in aspects of the university environment to that of the workplace create further unpredictability. As discussed in the literature review, Higgins et al., (2014) highlighted the conceptual differences of social work created a 'fundamental dissonance' between the Academy and the workplace. The university, with its focus on notions of human rights and emphasis on the relevance of the application of theory to practice conflicted with the narrower focus on process and tasks in the workplace (p.625). The impact of this dissonance may have contributed to the respondents' sense of being unprepared for their new role and confidence in their abilities to manage the demands made upon them leading to feelings of stress and dissatisfaction (Biggart et al., 2016).

A significant theme then emerges from the findings concerning adaption during the transition; the apparent unpredictability that confronted the respondents in the workplace through a competing conceptualisation of social work, along with the influence of their own early childhood experiences and personal dispositions to cope made the process of adaptation more problematic. The transition from the conceptualisation of social work presented to NQSWs in the university to a competing conceptualisation in the workplace can be

considered to create too much unpredictability for the NQSW to make the necessary adaptations to their assumptive world. Consequently, this leads to the generation of stress and anxiety both cognitively and emotionally. The above highlights how the personal psychosocial realm of the NQSW's world interacts with an uncertain and unpredictable external environment as they attempt to navigate the process of transition to the workplace.

This finding indicates that further exploration is required as it has implications for a range of issues including selection and admissions processes, the design and focus of teaching and the on-going support and learning that NQSWs require post qualification if the experiences of stress are to be addressed.

6.3 The role of personal history and traits on the experience of transition

6.3.1 The early development of resilient attributes

The pattern that emerged from the analysis of the respondents' early histories is that experiences of transition and change were a key feature in their lives and that it was experienced both emotionally and psychologically. These transitions were either contained and negotiated successfully or generated considerable anxiety, and stress for the respondents where containing opportunities were not available. Overall, all experiences of early transition were challenging for an individual's functioning, psychological wellbeing and sense of self-worth. These transitions presented developmental crises that needed to be resolved as discussed earlier concerning Erickson's model of psychosocial development (1970).

The contrasting reactions to transitional experiences reported by the respondents can in part be theorised to what Brink and Saunders delineate as the four phases of culture shock. These include: the 'honeymoon phase' characterised by excitement; 'disenchantment' whereby there is a realisation of the unpredictability of the new environment and the cultural norms of the new country impact on the individual sense of self; 'resolution' whereby there is an adaptation to the new culture and support systems are initiated ending with the 'effective function phase' whereby the individual has become bicultural (Brink and Saunders, 1976, pp. 126-138). What this theorisation does not clearly emphasise is the psychological dimensions of transition as suggested in the findings.

All the respondents experienced transitions on psychological, developmental and relationship levels as part of their upbringing. Experiences of adversity and victimisation for some respondents motivated them to break destructive emotional and psychological familial ties for their survival (as seen in the case of Sarah). These transitional experiences reflect the life cycle as characterised by stressful transitions when unexpected or even expected events occur (Miller, 2010). What they also highlight is an emerging pattern of containment;

successful transitions with facilitation are possible despite exposure to severe adverse and challenging circumstances.

Early experiences of adversity and trauma featured in several respondents' personal histories. The experience of trauma in the early lives of social workers has many significances in the process of transition to the workplace. The literature review in Chapter Two highlighted that a social worker's disposition and own traumatic experiences are linked to stress and vicarious trauma in the workplace, and how far an individual's early trauma is resolved is a key factor in their abilities to deal with such workplace stress (Bride et al., 2007; Shepel, 2009; McFadden, Campbell and Taylor, 2014). Thus, the personal experience and early history of social workers are closely correlated to resilience which is considered to act as a buffer to stress in the workplace and has the potential to promote psychological wellbeing (Grant and Kinman, 2010; 2014). The literature also acknowledges that early childhood trauma can act as a driver for individuals to enter the helping professions (Steven and Higgins, 2002). Concerns about NQSWs' wellbeing and consequences for retention and practice performance have led a major drive to ensure that social workers are resilient to meet the demands of the social work profession and should be supported once in the workplace to enhance these resilient qualities.

6.3.1.1 Levels of control

The findings of this study suggest that the level of control that a respondent held and exercised over the transitional process influenced the nature of the emotional responses that they experienced due to the change. The nature of control, whether internally or externally located, is regarded as a major factor correlated with emotional wellbeing in research on transition (Meyers, Lindenthal and Pepper, 1971 cited in Roskin, 1986). Findings highlighted by the HSE research (2013; 2017) also identify control as a common stressor in the workplace, i.e. the extent to which social workers felt they could exert this in shaping their work. It would then appear that providing NQSWs with opportunities to make decisions and choices about their transition is likely to be conducive to their successful adaption to the workplace environment. These forms of control could be afforded through collaboration between educators and employers in formulating strategies on how best a graduate can be supported through the transition process into the workplace. This could include the continued involvement of educators, post the completion of studies, to provide opportunities for the containment of graduate's emotional and psychological needs so that they can better adapt to the new professional role and workplace environment. This form of seamless support in bridging the gap between when a social work student completes their studies, graduates and

enters the workplace is worthy of further exploration given the findings that emerged from this small study about the positive outcomes of the provision of containing experiences in the respondents' lives.

6.3.1.2 Opportunities for containment

There is evidence in this study's findings that the provision of a containing experience has the potential to compensate for a respondent's perceived low level of control in affecting their situation and this has had the capacity in their past to facilitate a successful transition. What acted as a hindrance in the process of transition to the workplace is the lack of perceived and exercised control over situations facing the respondents and the lack of availability of containing experiences. Early experiences of victimisation, if left unresolved, were also likely to have enduring psychological impacts into adulthood but could, in instances where they were resolved, successfully act as powerful underlying motivators to enter social work education (Christie and Weeks, 1998; Stevens et al, 2012).

Grant and Kinman (2012; 2014) have arguably championed the way in promoting and enhancing social workers' resilience in the workplace from a positive psychology perspective. They conceptualise resilience as a quality and process that can be improved and developed rather than being innate (Grant and Kinman, 2015, p. 5). However, several critiques are emerging which highlight several unresolved issues in the literature on resilience: whether it exists as an attribute or process is not established; the extent to which individuals faced with adversity have agency; and, whether resilience is finite (Hickman, 2017). Joseph (2013) also highlights that the increased interest in the concept of resilience across policy literature and the professions is due to its fit with the dominant neoliberal discourse. While it may be speculative to claim that the idea of resilience is a neoliberal construct, it certainly individualises responsibility to the NQSW to cope within the workplace, failing to take full account of relational and broader factors such as training, employer and organisational factors. As discussed in the literature review, McFadden, Campbell and Taylor (2014) in their systematic literature review of resilience and burnout in child protection identified that the emotional demands placed on social workers resulted in a depletion of their emotional resources over time. They highlighted that both resilience and burnout outcomes were related to three key factors: the personal histories of individuals, the social work education and employee context and the organisational dimensions and experiences. The recent longitudinal evaluation of the Step Up programme (Smith et al., 2018) also highlights the benefits of the potential relationship between environmental factors, attitudes, subjective experiences and motivations for social work. These factors have

been shown in previous research to improve the retention of social workers (Carpenter et al., 2012, Hussein et al., 2014).

The entry-level professional capabilities for the selection and recruitment of students (BASW, 2016) require educators to assess resilience and emotional capacity as part of their selection criteria of students to their social work courses. The level of rigor applied to these processes is unclear given the broader context of the marketisation of higher education within which social work programmes operate. This environment places competing pressures and demands on courses to meet the requirements of university recruitment targets over the needs of the profession as outlined in the literature review. Locating the embodied 'selves' of social work students within this marketised environment can make these selves susceptible to the construction of student identities as purely customers, as defined by the government since the introduction of tuition fees (Bunce, 2017). Educators themselves are susceptible to these changing mind-sets in how they may perceive and consequently relate to students. This susceptibility runs the risk of marginalising and even ignoring the importance of understanding the emotional journeys of students before they enter social work education and consequently the emotional experiences of the learning process (Salzberger- Wittenberg, 1983).

6.3.2 Compassion as an underlying personal trait

A further significant theme that emerges from the findings is the expression of compassion as an underlying trait in the respondents' narratives. Compassion as a consistent theme was identified across all the respondents' narratives as the underlying motivating driver for their orientation towards social work. This need to care for others and alleviate their suffering was either influenced by the positive experiences of being cared for as a child, or extremely poor experiences of care due to early childhood experiences of victimisation. In many instances, there were experiences of being cared for, and supported by others, that influenced respondents underlying motivations towards a career in social work. This desire to care, originating in childhood, evolved in many instances through roles respondents later adopted for example through voluntary working or as a sibling or mother raising a young family. The part of familial influences and friends was also evident in many of the accounts and the modelling of altruistic values in shaping these underlying motivations towards pursuing social work education.

These findings on underlying motivations to pursue social work are consistent with research by Stevens et al. (2012) that explored the underlying reasons why people seek to become social workers and found, like previous studies, that primarily altruistic motivations

influenced by an individual's personal experience were the most critical drivers. Despite the experiences of stress and anxiety upon the transition to the workplace, the strength of this underlying motivator had endured into the workplace. The significance of these altruistic drivers in the workplace is supported by findings of an evaluation of the ASYE (Assessed and Supported Year in Employment) initiative in 2015 in the Eastern region of the country. It found that respondents were most positive about their ability to show care and compassion and to consult with service users and to be able to explain to them what they were doing and why (Bailey and Sach, 2015).

6.3.2.1 Compassion as a mediator of transition stress

Despite the experiences of stress on immediate entry to the workplace, the underlying motivation of wanting to offer compassion to others remained resolute for the respondents. This is consistent with findings from a longitudinal study of the ASYE programme undertaken by Skills for Care which found that four-fifths of respondents in the study reported 'satisfaction with the opportunities they've had to put their social work values into practice (Skills for Care, 2015, p26). Thus, underlying personality traits which act as motivators to pursue social work as a vocation may hold the potential to mediate and buffer some of the experiences of stress in early career practitioners and need to be harnessed and developed as part of a respondent's emerging professional identity.

Understanding the underlying motivations of students to pursue social work education is becoming increasingly recognised as important given this motivation determines to a degree the strengths and weaknesses of the social work student (Breen and Lindsay, 2002); it also affects the way social workers will tend to relate to their profession (Hackett et al., 2003; Stevens et al., 2012). These motivations are likely to stem from multiple factors rather than any one single motivation (Gov.Scot, 2015). The findings from the thematic review of the narratives are likely to reflect the respondents' principal motivation of compassion as the underlying driver and that secondary motivations are likely to have emerged during their engagement in social work education despite not being revealed by the findings of this study.

The role of respondents' personal history and personal traits was highly influential in their emotional experiences of transition to the workplace, and the emotional and psychological dimensions of this experience need to be better understood. A psychosocial understanding of transition and adaptation is a useful way to understand this transition process, and it is likely that early experiences of change and the transition to the workplace follow similar psychosocial trajectories of adaptation. The experience of high levels of transition-related stress and anxiety suggest that the assumptive world of the respondents was exposed to too

much unpredictability for them to adapt on a psychosocial level successfully. This unpredictability was increased by the immediacy of expectations to perform on entry to the workplace, and the presentation of a differing neoliberalised concept of social work in the workplace which starkly contrasted to what they had been taught in the university. These tensions likely resulted in the respondent becoming conflicted and facing significant challenges.

In conclusion, the early experiences of transition revealed in the respondents' personal histories indicate that where there was a level of predictability and control over the process of transition, then a more favourable emotional response was observable. The personal accounts also reveal the significance of personality traits in the process of transition to the workplace. Locating the underlying motivators of compassion that emerge from the findings within an increasingly bureaucratised workplace environment (Ferguson and Lavalette, 2006) and reduced financial resources to provide services created conflicts for NQSWs between their altruistic motivations and the realities of practice. Stevens et al. (2010) suggest this mismatch may account as one factor that contributes to the high rates of stress and burnout in the profession.

One way that educators could respond to providing more predictability in the transition process is to offer more orientation opportunities for applicants who may be considering entry to a social work course. Campanini and Facchini (2015) in researching the values and motivations of Italian students to undertake the qualifying social work degree, found the data emerging suggested that orientation opportunities should be provided to applicants planning to choose social work so that the roles and functions of a social worker can be more precisely outlined to limit unrealistic assumptions about the profession. The recent longitudinal evaluation of the fast track Step Up to Social Work programme also explored social workers' early career pathways (Smith et al., 2018). The graduates interviewed in the study did not consider that their experiences as NQSWs were different to what they had expected but did highlight that they did not expect the true pressures of practice until they were immersed within it. In comparison, the study explored the same theme with a group of graduates from traditional social work programmes and found that this comparator group highlighted that the reality of the workplace far exceeds their expectations. Some articulated how their experiences were affected by anxiety and fear of child protection work and a further group highlighted their experiences of high levels of stress and difficulties in coping (Smith, 2018, p.27)

Furthermore, the implications of this thesis study findings are for social work educators and employers to consider how far they harness the altruistic motivations and orientations of students through the social work education process, and then provide opportunities to facilitate the consolidation of these motivations within the workplace to support NQSWs' career aspirations (Bradley, 2008).

The early journeys of social work students are essential for educators to understand and recognise so that they can perceive students in a holistic sense of who they are; that students hold multiple identities and affective as well as cognitive experiences and capacities that need to be drawn upon through the social work education process. Educators need to pay due consideration to this as part of the social work curriculum and how students' capacities to recognise, regulate and manage anxieties can be promoted through the educational learning process (Grant, Kinman and Baker, 2013). Perhaps this singular point is what the methodological design of the VCRM, together with a psychosocial approach, reveals that is lacking in the related literature on the transition of NQSWs to the workplace. This application of this methodological design can then be claimed as an original contribution that this study makes to the field.

6.4 The role of organisational factors on the respondents' response to the transition

This section of the discussion considers the findings on the role of organisational factors on the respondents' emotional experiences of transition and the workplace environment. It begins with a discussion of the findings on the respondents' perceptions of the level of preparedness provided by their social work education and training programme for making a successful transition to the workplace.

6.4.1 Preparation for the workplace

The study findings highlight that respondents held a general level of dissatisfaction with the level of preparedness by the social work education programme (this was reinforced by the focus group of social workers ending their period of ASYE). The main criticism of qualifying education was its over-emphasis on the teaching of theoretical components and the lack of opportunities to be introduced to the realities of practice. This criticism has been highlighted earlier as a distorted perception given the regulatory requirements for a balanced curriculum between theoretical learning in the classroom and professional skills development in practice. Given the previous discussions on stressors inherent in the workplace environment, the issue may not be one of the levels of preparedness by the social work programme itself but more reliant on whether the workplace itself is inappropriately stressful. Perhaps no level of preparedness could be enough to prepare NQSWs for the unreasonable demands of

contemporary practice. None-the-less, despite the study sample being too small to give generalisable answers to these points, the respondents' opinions on the lack of preparedness is grounded in their experiences. These experiences suggest that both the workplace is at fault, and it's the social work programme that hasn't prepared them that has contributed to their experiences of stress and anxiety several months into the practice.

Given the polarisation of views on what the outcomes of social work education should be as discussed in the review of the literature, what may have been overlooked is a development stage between graduation and consolidation of self in the workplace in the current preparedness discourse. Indeed, given the significance of the transition process for respondents on emotional and psychological levels and the real struggles faced on entry to the workplace, there is a need for providing the respondent with opportunities that can bridge their journey from education to the workplace and facilitate containment to make a successful transition on physical, cognitive and psychological levels.

It is likely that the process of transition to the workplace has always been an emotional struggle for social work graduates, and NQSWs in the past have had to deal with the same high risks and pressures of caseload as today. A substantial difference is that previously there were not the high expectations on performance placed on NQSWs on their immediate entry to the workplace and the implicit threats of being pathologised as not coping.

In summary, the nature of social work practice requires social workers to have the capacities to contain highly intense emotional states and to develop constructive relationships with families who in the context of child protection work are usually unwilling to engage (Ellett et al., 2007). However, the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace (Ingram, 2012, 2013) and the lack of opportunities for emotional containment from managers seemed to have compounded most of the respondents' experience of stress and anxiety. While social workers should be able to self-contain and demonstrate resilience in the workplace; it is also recognised as an interaction between the individual and the organisational context (Grant and Kinman, 2012).

6.4.2 The workplace environment

The review of the literature in Chapter Two highlighted how social work in England had been influenced and shaped over the past forty years by politics that have embraced neoliberal ideologies. Harris's conceptual framework (Harris, 2014) identifies the manifestation of neoliberal's key propositions that correspond to three processes: marketisation, consumerisation and managerialism (Harris, 2014, p.8). While the immediate context of the respondents' narratives was the workplace; it is likely that broader

social, cultural and political contexts equally influenced their emotional experiences of transition to the workplace. These contexts have already been shown to be underpinned by the processes of marketisation, consumerisation, and managerialism.

The respondents in this study described the workplace as stressful and bureaucratic and a challenging environment in which to work. These experiences are consistent with the findings outlined in the literature review (Laming, 2009; Bates et al., 2010; Munro, 2011; Moriarty et al., 2011; Moriarty, Baginsky and Manthorpe 2015). Given the reported experiences of transition-related stress in this study, key questions begin to arise from the findings. How far is a respondent's immediate workplace environment itself conducive to provide the necessary support to meet their needs for emotional containment? To what degree is the immediate workplace environment experienced by the respondents as cognitively and emotionally resonant with their values, beliefs, and practices as opposed to dissonant and conflicting? Is the respondent's emotional discomfort on entry to the workplace inevitable given the competing conceptualisations of social work discussed earlier in the study and the dominance of neoliberal ideas and practices in the workplace? To respond to these emerging questions about the utility of the organisational environment to provide containment for transition-related stress and anxiety it is first necessary to establish what delineates a resonant or dissonant workplace environment and how these environments may be constituted.

6.5 Conceptualising resonant and dissonant workplace environments

To explore these questions, I considered the theory of cognitive dissonance as a way of trying to theorise the internal struggles of the respondents in the transition process. Cognitive dissonance is described as 'a condition of stress, or a feeling of inner discomfort caused by conflicting ideas, values, beliefs or practices. It is a situation where having two or more conflicting thoughts bring about psychological discomfort' (Marks, 2017). Individuals, when presented with internal conflicts or cognitions, are likely to seek equilibrium between attitudes, beliefs, and practices to reduce or eliminate any discrepancies to prevent emotional discomfort. Further, I considered Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence which he connected to leadership and indicated that resonant leaders tended to manage with more emotional intelligence and conversely dissonant leaders were less influencing in times of stress (Goleman, 1996, Goleman and Cherniss, 2001). Biggart et al. (2016) in her study of emotional intelligence and burnout in child protection made several recommendations for senior and team managers in creating favourable emotional climates in the workplace and being receptive to the emotional needs of staff. Both requirements pre-suppose a degree of emotional intelligence on the part of senior and team managers. Thus, it could be

hypothesised that a workplace environment that created a favourable emotional climate in meeting the needs of staff, and team managers who were resonant, could provide containment to individuals at times of stress and anxiety (Wagner et al., 2013). Conversely, an environment that marginalised emotion and team managers who lacked emotional intelligence insights were likely to create a dissonant immediate workplace environment.

The respondents did not identify the role of their immediate managers as significant supports in their transition to the workplace as outlined earlier. Given the significant theme of stress and anxiety identified as the emotional experience of transition to the workplace, the role that managers played in supporting the respondents in this process was minimal. Indeed, many respondents highlighted that the role of their manager contributed to their experiences of stress and anxiety whether through raised expectations on performance or inadvertently through a managerial and procedural style of management to get tasks completed under pressure. As the research indicates, the longer-term effects of dissonant leadership approaches are likely to cause frustration, stress, and disengagement amongst staff, and such managers are likely to be portrayed as distant and unapproachable (Kokemuller, 2007).

Currently, there is scant research on the impact of leadership styles in social work and to what extent leadership styles can influence and create workplace cultures that are resonant to NQSWs' emotional needs. While a focus on the individual self-care of NQSWs is important by developing understandings of resilience, mindfulness, and emotional intelligence, these individualised approaches are limited. The underpinning theoretical basis for these approaches stems from the discipline of self- psychology and is a reactive response to addressing the impacts of stress rather than aimed at addressing the underlying causations. There are insights to be gleaned from other disciplines in researching how managers can promote supportive and containing workplace environments. A systematic review of the literature on nursing leadership (Cummings et al., 2010) indicates that resonant leadership occurs when "there is an investment of relational energy . . . to build relationships with RNs [Registered Nurses] and manage emotion in the workplace" (Cummings, 2004, p. 76). The review describes leadership practices that tend to have positive outcomes, such as increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment, improved recruitment and retention rates, improved staff health (decreased anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and stress), and increased productivity.

The literature review in Chapter Two discussed at length the impact of neoliberalism on social work and how it has impacted on creating managerial and procedural workplace cultures. Team managers who operate more with an authoritarian style of leadership tend to

be more dissonant and are likely to create a dissonant workplace environment. While an authoritative form of management may be necessary at times; it leads to a marginalisation of emotion in the workplace (Ingram, 2013; Gibson, 2013). Arguably within the present neoliberalised organisational and workplace context in which social work operates, an authoritarian style of management and leadership is all that can, and does, exist.

6.5.1 Containment in the workplace

A key feature throughout this study has been the emphasis placed on the influence of containment and containing experiences in the lives of respondents, whether in their early life histories or the workplace context. Bion's (1962) ideas of early, ongoing experiences of containment enable an individual's development of thinking to manage and negotiate experiences and emotion successfully. The lack of containing opportunities, or poor containing experiences, affects cognitive and emotional development and uncontainable feelings and experiences occur throughout the lifespan (Steckley, 2013). The concept of containment has strong parallels with attachment, as previously discussed.

The discussion on the role of contextual factors raised a fundamental question: is containment in the workplace possible given the nature of the neoliberalised environment within which social work operates? A containing workplace environment can be envisaged to have several unique characteristics. It should have the ability to promote reliably safe boundaries for NQSWs between their personal and professional lives. It should offer protective physical and psychological spaces where staff could be facilitated to express their anxieties and fears about practice and be supported to process the emotional impacts of front-line practice and challenging encounters with service users. These processes of containment would enable the NQSW themselves to feel valued and secure and would act to create a stable base within the immediate workplace setting. The provision of affective supervision by a resonant team manager would be a crucial component in creating a conducive emotional work climate. Supervision could provide social workers with the opportunity to undertake direct work, receive positive feedback, and have opportunities for collaboration and learning as this is likely to mitigate the emotional demands of the social work role (Biggart et al., 2016, p.2).

6.5.2 Dissonant containment in the workplace

While the workplace environment provided a structure for the organisation and delivery of services, and the supervision of staff in supporting them to execute their duties, it did not meet the emotional needs of the respondents in this study, as revealed by the findings. The pressures experienced by respondents of the managerial expectations on performance, very

early in the transition to the workplace, reflect the managerialist context of contemporary social work practice. It could be that the marginalisation of emotion hindered respondents in expressing the anxieties that these pressures created for fear of being perceived as lacking competence. The lack of containment of the psychological impacts of front-line practice was also clearly apparent as evidenced by the stresses and anxieties generated in the workplace and contaminating home life, thus blurring personal and professional boundaries and spaces.

The findings revealed that the respondents were seeking opportunities for containment for those anxieties that were beyond their capacities to contain. The reliance on informal support mechanisms with colleagues could be considered as attempts to access a secure base in the workplace. However, the bureaucratisation of the workplace could then be seen to give rise to a dissonant form of containment. The workplace attempted to offer structure and support to respondents, but these attempts were not speaking to the emotional experiences and needs of the respondents. The nature of the neoliberal organisational environment with its emphasis on managerial and procedural forms of governance could not facilitate the containing experiences the respondents required.

6.6 Summary

The findings revealed that the ability of a neoliberal workplace environment in providing the necessary containment of NQSWs' anxiety is problematic. While it may have intentions to do so, the current ways in which it is constituted, and support provided does not meet the emotional and psychological needs of NQSWs. Thus, NQSWs cannot be contained in an explicit neoliberal environment as it is dissonant by nature, and this dissonance is further compounded by a competing conceptualisation of social work that has emerged in the workplace.

Despite several respondents acknowledging the influence of broader political contexts like the imposition of the government's austerity policies and welfare cuts, there was a general tendency by respondents to be resigned to these matters rather than articulating how these policies could be challenged (Grootegoed and Smith 2018). The findings would concur with research highlighted in the literature review that the underlying imperative for the profession to eradicate poverty is not necessarily shared amongst professionals (Wilson et al., 2017). This may suggest that the emerging conceptualisation of social work (Narey, 2014) is becoming embedded indelibly into the mind-sets of new practitioners and a changing purpose of the profession which emphasises changing individuals rather than changing broader structural systems that create inequalities. The pace of a changing value base for

social work as highlighted by authors such as Woodcock and Dixon (2005) and Stevens et al. (2012) is today perhaps more rapid than is recognised.

Chapter Seven: Reflections and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This concluding Chapter begins with a review of the study, and then directly responds to the research questions and highlights what it has found. The discussion then outlines the recommendations proposed for social work educators and employers. The study's methodological design is evaluated, and the limitations discussed. The Chapter concludes with a reflection on my learning and development in undertaking this study and suggests possible directions for future research.

7.2 Review of the study

This study emerged from a concern about the psychological and emotional wellbeing of Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWs) and a desire to better understand their emotional experience of transition from social work graduation to the workplace. These concerns were motivated by my experiences of being a social work educator for over 20 years and becoming alarmed at the high rates of stress and burnout of early career social workers. As identified in the literature review, I was particularly interested in considering the emotional experience of transition by locating this within the inter-related domains of the neoliberalisation of the social work profession, the consequent emergence of a competing conceptualisation of social work and the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace.

There is a growing interest in the experience of stress and burnout in early career practitioners because of serious concerns over staff wellbeing, problems with staff retention and the impact on the delivery of services. Much of the current research on the topic of stress in social work focuses on exploring ways to support or enhance social workers' emotional resilience to counter the deleterious effects of stress and burnout. Less attention is given to empirical research about the actual emotional experiences of NQSWs and how they can be better prepared and supported in making a successful transition to the workplace. This study aims to contribute to the emerging body of knowledge concerned with addressing the impacts of stress on early career practitioners. Work completed in the earlier phases of the doctorate programme sharpened the focus of this research study and developed my interest and skills in applying a methodological design based on psychosocial research approaches and incorporating the voice-centred relational method (VCRM). What has emerged is a small-scale, exploratory qualitative study, based on data gathered from individual interviews with a total of five participants. The data sets from these interviews were analysed using elements of a psychosocial approach, thematic analysis and the voice-centred relational method to

produce in-depth and reflexive interpretations of the respondents' narratives of the emotional experience of transitioning to the workplace.

7.3 Overview of the findings and recommendations

This study has found that this transition experience is challenging to negotiate and invokes significant emotional responses and challenges for the NQSW. These emotional responses are dominated by experiences of stress and anxiety, relatively early into the NQSWs entry to the workplace, which can lead in certain circumstances to compassion fatigue and burnout. The study also reveals that among the personal histories and traits of NQSWs, key underlying motivators that orientate individuals towards social work are identifiable. Compassion and altruistic motivators appear to endure over time despite the emotional challenges and conflicts that the NQSW is presented with during the transition phase and the period immediately after. These motivators have the potential to act as buffers to ameliorate some of the impacts of transition-related stress.

This study also found that the present polarisation on the purposes of social work education between employers and social work educators has its antecedents in historical conflicts spanning the last 40 years. The conflict between defining social work narrowly as a statutory function or as a broader form of social action are played out through the discourse on the preparedness of graduates for the workplace, reforms of social work education and numerous government policy interventions. What these conflicts create for NQSWs is a high degree of unpredictability in the workplace environment. The conceptualisation of social work taught within the university starkly contrasts with social work's conceptualisation in the workplace. Thus, the attempts by NQSWs at trying to adapt to the workplace environment successfully becomes problematic and a stressful experience.

What this study also reveals is the impact of relational and contextual factors have the most significant effect on influencing the emotional experiences of NQSWs' transition to the workplace. The neoliberalisation of social work has instituted organisational workplace cultures with the processes of marketisation, consumerisation, and managerialism. These processes act to inhibit and diminish the spaces for the legitimisation of emotion in social work.

The fractious encounters with the families of service users reflect the increasing emotional intensity of front-line practice. This intensity is not fully understood in the workplace, and thus the forms of structured support that are provided to NQSWs by managers do not adequately meet their emotional needs. These 'supportive' structures prioritise the management and performance of NQSWs' workloads and tacitly foster the creation of

dissonant workplace cultures. Within these dissonant cultures, the legitimacy of the role of emotion inadvertently becomes marginalised. The NQSW is then placed in the precarious position of having to individually manage the complexities and multiple impacts on cognitive and emotional levels of their transition to the workplace by relying on their own depleting personal resources. The lack of opportunities for the facilitation of containment in the workplace forces the NQSW to seek supports within their informal networks or resort to their self-capacities and resilience. The perceived inability to cope is seen as a failure of one's lack of emotional resilience. The meeting of emotional needs within this contextualisation is made the responsibility of the NQSW themselves; a form of neoliberal individualism which assumes a self as an autonomous agent, responsible for building a personal capacity for self-provision. Thus, the neoliberalised workplace inadvertently silences NQSWs' emotional needs as they fear the inability to self-manage reflects a lack of professional competence. The current constitution of the workplace into which NQSWs enter is not conducive to facilitating or containing NQSWs' development of an emotionally resilient sense of self and emergence as a professional social worker.

7.3.1 Recommendations for social work employers

The findings from this study suggest that if the experiences of stress and burnout among early career social workers are to be tackled, then social work employers need to engage in addressing several critical shortfalls in the current way NQSWs are to be supported in the process of transition to the workplace and their early roles as developing professionals.

The findings of this study would firstly concur with the recommendations of the University of East Anglia randomised control trial study on emotional intelligence and burnout among social workers (Biggart et al., 2016). The key recommendation from this policy briefing for local authority senior managers is to adopt the Health and Safety Executive framework for tackling stress at work (HSE 2007), this includes addressing the following everyday identified stressors in the workplace:

Demands (including caseload, work patterns, work pace, working hours and the working environment).

Control (how much say the person has in the way they do their work).

Support (which includes the encouragement, sponsorship, and resources provided by the organization, line management and colleagues).

Relationships at work (which includes promoting positive working practices to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour).

Role (whether people understand their role within the organization and whether the organization ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles).

While the above would address some of the immediate concerns of stress in the workplace, longer-term change is also required, and the following recommendations are made:

Emotional resonance: Social work organisations need to adopt a whole-system approach in creating favourable emotional climates in the workplace that are resonant to the emotional needs of NQSWs.

The legitimacy of emotion: The centrality of emotion and emotionality as a legitimate part of social work practice needs to be acknowledged and re-established.

Affective supervision: Team managers need to develop their capacities for emotional intelligence so that they can provide affective supervision to their staff.

Psychosocial organisations: Social work organisations need to promote a psychosocially informed work environment.

7.3.2 Recommendations for social work educators

The specific recommendations that emerge from the findings of this study about the organisation and delivery of social work education for the Academy are:

Holistic perceptions of students: More holistically understand and engage with social work students as embodiments of their journeys to social work, avoiding framing students narrowly as consumers in the present marketised higher education environment.

Underlying motivations: Develop ways to harness the underlying motivating personal traits of students wishing to pursue a career in social work as a part of their developing professional identity.

Developing resilience: Consider ways in how these underlying personal traits can be integrated as part of the learning processes on social work programmes and how these can be supported to develop student's emotional and psychological resilience.

Emotional preparation: Better prepare students for the realities of practice, the emotional intensity of the work and the nature of complicated relationships with service users.

7.4 Reflections on the study design and limitations

A major strength of this research study is that it effectively voices the emotional experiences of the study participants' transition to the workplace. The methodological design was a good fit with my approach and skills as a researcher. The role of reflexivity was crucial in the co-production of data and subsequent analysis and interpretation of the findings. Thus, the capacity to be reflexive worked well with a VCRM and psychosocial and narrative approach. A significant limitation of this study is the sample size; however, this can be stepped up in future research. While the findings are not generalisable given the small sample, the combination of the VCRM, thematic analysis, and psychosocial approach enhanced the reliability of the findings. As part of knowledge transfer, the focus groups allowed the study findings to be applied directly to social work practice and demonstrated the different contexts within which the findings could be explored and discussed.

It is important to note that the findings are not the actual voices of the participants but reflexive interpretations and co-productions between the researcher and researched; therefore, tentative claims to knowledge construction are made. The ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study in making every attempt to be true to the participants' experiences as far as possible and questioning throughout the study my own biases and assumptions about the emotional experience of entering the workplace. Keeping a reflective research journal was invaluable in this regard; however, more explicit and transparent use of reflexivity and analysis of my responses and reactions to the data could have been provided.

What would have strengthened the methodological design would have been to triangulate the study findings by interrogating these with a separate focus group of NQSWs as part of a structured methodological approach to explore how far the findings of this study resonated with their experience of transition to the workplace. A third phase interview scheduled after the participants had been in the workplace for twelve months would also have further broadened the study and findings.

Finally, the inter-rater reliability of the thematic analysis could have been strengthened by having a second researcher who independently coded a portion of the data to seek a rate above 80%. Similarly, member checking of the constructed narratives and 'I-Poems' as part of the VCRM data generation and analysis process would have increased the reliability of the data.

Concerning the selection of study participants, in hindsight, it would have been better to have recruited participants to the study much earlier before the point of graduation. This strategy would have allowed a better opportunity to gauge their emotional experiences for the first phase interviews before their entry to the workplace.

7.5 Possible directions for future research: an 'emotional curriculum' for social work

A key consideration for the Social Work Academy is to consider the above recommendations within the development of an overarching emotional curriculum for social work. This emotional curriculum would involve supporting students to develop competencies that are currently known to underpin emotional resilience, both for individual wellbeing, but also for enhancing practice outcomes. Further emphasis in the social work curriculum is needed which facilitates the development of a student's reflective and reflexive capacities and understanding of the multi-faceted nature of empathy and empathic working with service users (Schon, 1987). Social work educators should model for students the experience of receiving reflective and affective supervision to explore student's personal histories and the anticipated emotional impacts of direct practice. The 'Changing Lives Report' by the Scottish Executive in 2006 lays the framework for such a vision of social work and social work education (21st Century Social Work Review Group, 2006).

7.6 Contribution to knowledge

The distinctive contribution that this study claims to make to the substantive knowledge primarily relates to the merging of psychosocial understandings of individual experience with broader structural contexts. This merger is made throughout this study through the review of the literature, the design of the methodology and the analysis of the findings. The literature review combined the political contextual influences on the shaping of social work with the marginalisation of emotion in the workplace. The value of the methodology strengthened the bridge between the psychosocial and structural realms by combining the voice-centred relational method with a psychosocial approach. The analysis of findings was within a conceptual framework that incorporated a critical neoliberal political perspective and took account of the increasing emotional intensity of social work practice. The findings reveal that Newly Qualified Social Workers' emotions when transitioning to the workplace

are both psychosocially and socially structured within the current neoliberalised political context which constitutes the social work workplace.

Generally, the emotional experience of transition to the workplace is a challenging and stressful event, and the current constitution of the workplace cannot facilitate containment. These experiences are influenced and impacted by many factors which are personal, relational and contextual. Based on studies elsewhere, it is likely that the continuing experiences of stress and anxiety originating from the workplace are likely to have cumulative adverse impacts on the emotional and psychological wellbeing of NQSWs and consequently pose risks for service users.

This focus on emotional experience is a further significant contribution to the substantive knowledge and social work discipline. These experiences are reactive to the unpredictability that confronts the NQSW in the workplace through the competing conceptualisations of social work that currently exist. The transition from the conceptualisation of social work presented to NQSWs in the university to a competing conceptualisation in the workplace can be considered to create too much unpredictability for the NQSW to make the necessary psychosocial adaptations to their assumptive world. Consequently, this leads to the generation of stress and anxiety both cognitively and emotionally. Given the current state of play and polarisations between the Academy and employers on the role and purpose of social work, the personal psychosocial realm of the NQSW's world will continue to interact with an uncertain and unpredictable external environment as they attempt to navigate the process of transition to the workplace

The merging of the psychosocial with the structural domains through the literature review, methodology, and analysis of findings provide an opportunity for the beginnings of a discussion in social work of combining two distinct yet opposing perspectives. This merger is essential because there is growing recognition and a developing awareness that emotions play an influential role when considering structural issues. Social workers who focus primarily on direct work with service users taking a psychosocial perspective need to take account of broader structural aspects in the way they contextualise their work.

The originality in this study of merging psychosocial and structural elements and the theorisation of the findings makes a valid contribution to a contemporary understanding on the challenges that are faced by NQSWs and what educators and employers can collectively contribute in addressing these. This study also makes an original contribution to knowledge through the way it utilizes and combines psychosocial research with the voice-centred relational method as a unique methodological design to articulate the emotional experiences,

and amplify the voices of, Newly Qualified Social Workers entering front-line practice. It also makes a significant and original contribution in highlighting the ways in which emotion has, and is, being marginalised in the workplace and how the processes of neoliberalism are acting to suppress the ‘emotional voice’ of social work practice and practitioners.

7.7 Reflections: the experience of carrying out the research

This study, along with the whole doctoral programme over the past five years has been a personal emotional journey. For many years I held deep anxiety that my role as a social work educator was not sufficiently preparing students for the emotional realities of the workplace. The doctorate and this study have allowed me to objectively explore this underlying assumption and bias and helped me to conclude that the experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers are influenced and impacted by a multitude of psychosocial and structural factors. These factors exist within the broader neoliberalisation of social work which has taken place over several decades in England. Neoliberalism has constructed bureaucratic social work organisations underpinned by managerialist ideas and Newly Qualified Social Workers entering these organisations are assumed to hold individual capacities to cope and perform within an increased emotionally intense environment that has forced out the emotional context of social work to the margins.

This study has allowed me an opportunity to engage personally with the emotional experiences of Newly Qualified Social Workers and strengthens my resolve to contribute to influencing and shaping the future of social work education through future research and continued direct involvement as an educator in social work education.

7.8 Conclusion

The findings from this study contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the emotional transition of Newly Qualified Social Workers to the workplace. This study was driven by deep concern and empathic connectedness to the struggles that NQSWs currently face in establishing themselves as resilient professionals in the contemporary field of social work. The study has allowed me to further understand that the struggles that are encountered have an emotional dimension, currently overlooked, which causes the NQSW considerable anxiety and stress. These emotional experiences are influenced and constructed within the current organisation of social work, and thus the emotional experiences of NQSWs are socially constructed with the political workplace context. The neoliberalisation of social work over many decades has created workplace cultures where the space for the legitimacy of emotion has been neutralised, and thus individual emotional suffering is negated. Perhaps the emotions expressed by all the NQSWs in this study is how neoliberalism ‘feels’. That the

processes of managerialism, commodification and proceduralism, as highlighted by Harris (2014), act to neutralise emotion in the workplace and re-create the NQSW as a disembodied subject whose performance can be measured and monitored.

While the findings of this small-scale and exploratory study cannot be generalised, the overall intent has been to begin a discussion that is crucial in the profession on the merger of the psychosocial realms of individual experience with the structural issues that are currently impacting the profession of social work. It is hoped that this study has generated a curiosity amongst practitioners and the Academy to engage in a conversation on how this merger can help us better understand and support the transition of Newly Qualified Social Workers into the workplace and the consolidation of their emerging professional identities as resilient emotional social workers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Information Sheet for Participants



AN EXPLORATION OF NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF TRANSITIONING TO THE PROFESSIONAL WORK PLACE

Background and aims

There is a growing interest in the extent to which newly qualified social workers are prepared for their entry to the workplace and how they can be supported to manage the pressures of frontline practice as early career practitioners. The purpose of this research study which will run for six months is to develop an understanding of the process of transition from studying within a pre-qualifying programme to beginning qualified practice in the work place. This study aims to investigate how this process of transition is experienced and what can be done both by educators and employers to support newly qualified social workers to establish themselves in the work place.

Why are you being asked to participate in this research?

This research study is part of the assessment requirements of the Doctoral Social Work program at the School of Education and Social Work, University of Sussex UK. Whilst this research is being undertaken in my capacity as a doctoral student on this program, I am also employed as Director of Professional Practice with the BC College of Social Workers. Before you decide on whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

You are being asked to participate in this study as you have registered with the BC College of Social Workers within the past 12 months following your completion of a social work program of study and your qualification as a social worker. The study will invite approximately 30 registrants who have qualified within the past 12 months to volunteer to participate. Five participants will be randomly selected from those who volunteer.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time up until the completion of the research in August 2014, and without giving a reason.

Appendix 2: Final categories and themes extracted from the data

Category	Themes within categories	Codes	Example of narrative extracts
Narratives of the journey to social work	Pre-course Experiences	<p>Early childhood experiences</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Early motivations</p> <p>Pre- education experiences</p> <p>Experiences of transition</p>	<p><i>My childhood was all the time we spent in our bedrooms.</i></p> <p><i>I grew up in a stable house and they [parents] remained very happy.</i></p> <p><i>I've got three children and stuff</i></p> <p><i>Those type of people, I always like to work with people. Like I said, I've been brought up seeing my family looking after people.</i></p> <p><i>By the time I was ready to go back to career they said, "Oh, you've been out of banking jobs a long time</i></p>
Narratives of self	<p>Emotional experience</p> <p>Personal traits</p>	<p>Stress and anxiety</p> <p>Compassion</p>	<p><i>Yesterday, I didn't have a very nice day. I just wanted to go home and go to bed and hide.</i></p> <p><i>She was effing and blinding at me, telling me how useless I am. I went home, and I said to my partner, "I've had a horrible day, I'm leaving'.</i></p> <p><i>I'm so passionate about making a difference. That's what keeps me going,</i></p>
Narratives of the relational	Supports and hindrances in workplace	Spoken relationships	<i>I love social work. You get your caseloads and they're like your babies. So, you fight for them.</i>

		Unspoken relationships	<p><i>I've got three children and stuff, but I think sometimes when I go out and see things, it makes me go home and want to hug my kids just that little bit tighter.</i></p> <p><i>Self-efficacy</i></p> <p><i>Social work education programme</i></p>
Narrative of the contextual	Workplace, organisational and political contexts	<p>Work related stresses</p> <p>Bureaucracy</p> <p>Level of readiness</p> <p>Impacts of austerity</p>	<p><i>I think that there have been times where work has built up and I've felt quite overwhelmed. I've gone through that motion a few times now'</i></p> <p><i>It's a bit all kind of stressful. I have management, "Have you done this? Have you done this?" So yeah, it's a bit, stressful.</i></p> <p><i>I've reflected back on my education at university and I don't really feel that it gave me a true reflection of what the job role involves. I just don't think it was specific enough.</i></p> <p><i>I really struggle with that. With what people are going through and how they are suffering because of the cuts to their benefits. It's really difficult to bear.</i></p>

Appendix 3: Ethical Approval Certificate



Certificate of Approval	
Reference Number:	ER/MS684/2
Title Of Project:	An exploration of newly qualified social workers' experiences of transitioning to the professional workplace
Principal Investigator (PI):	Makhan Shergill
Student:	Makhan Shergill
Collaborators:	DR MJ Lefevre (Supervisor)
Duration Of Approval:	n/a
Expected Start Date:	17-Apr-2014
Date Of Approval:	11-Apr-2014
Approval Expiry Date:	17-Apr-2015
Approved By:	Jayne Paulin
Name of Authorised Signatory:	Stephen Shute
Date:	14-Apr-2014
<p>*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.</p> <p>Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:</p> <p>Amendments to protocol</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation. <p>Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC. <p>Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence. 	

Appendix 4: Emily's Full I- Poem (1st phase interview)

I did my degree in Criminology
 I came out of that
 I originally wanted to be a police officer.
 I came out of that not really kind of having much of a clue what I wanted to do.
 I tried to get into the police. That didn't work,
 I ended up doing kind of jobs that I really wasn't that interested in.
 I did some volunteer work with the probation service,
 I realized that I wanted to do something in that kind of arena.
 I decided that I needed to go back to university.
 I found it hard
 I looked at a lot of universities, a lot of them, and needed sort of a year's experience.
 I didn't have that experience
 I got on the course
 I always wanted to know that it was something involving people, and helping.
 I know that's a pretty cliché thing to say,
 I was always interested in crime, and in the police and what they do
 I look back at it and I think actually I wouldn't want to do that, the work the police do now,
 I ... I much more enjoy the social work side of things.
 I love it, but it's a lot to do.
 I don't know really, it's just always been something I've been interested in.
 I had three years of work, doing jobs I didn't really like.
 I didn't feel like I was making any difference.
 I had a convers- to be honest I got really, really- not depressed,
 I was really alone.
 I was feeling like I didn't have a purpose,
 I was just doing jobs for the sake of earning money
 not really doing things I like doing.
 I had a conversation with my mu., we talked about a lot of different careers
 She said, "you're intelligent. I work with social workers every day,
 the standard I work with aren't particularly great," she said
 "I'm sure that would be something you could do."
 The more I looked into it, and I looked
 I suppose I didn't really know what social workers did,
 I know that sounds weird, but you ... I don't know,
 I have a perception of it, probably what everyone else does.
 I looked into it and I thought, "You know, I really like the sound of that," and applied for it.

I suppose it was the conversation with my mum really.

I was alone, yeah.

I was a bit lost.

I wasn't really enjoying my life,
I've always had friends and family surrounding me, but my work just felt really unfulfilling.

I wanted something that was more- it would drive me,

I wanted something that really interested me.

I wanted to make that difference in people's lives,

That's kind of- it was just quite a low time for me.

I just felt very, always "where's my life going?"

I don't want this to be the rest of my life,

I don't want to work in a coffee shop for the rest of my life.

That's kind of how I felt.

I'd just get really sad a lot of the time, just cry a lot of the time, and just feel quite down, really.

I felt, "you know what,

I need to do something, and it might mean going back to uni for two years,

I'm prepared to do that if it's going to get me where I want to be.

I decided I was going to go to University and I loved it.

It was a really great, great feeling.

It was hard, it was really hard.

I made some great friends, but the assignments were hard.

I didn't have a lot of time on the weekends to myself.

I often was working.

I thought, "god, why did I sort of get myself into this, because this is so intense

I knew that I just had to keep going.

I learned, the more I wanted to do it.

I learned about what social workers did

I wanted to be involved in it.

I was becoming more informed.

I suppose it was just making me more aware of a lot of things

I haven't ever known about before.

I still had work to do, but I did a lot of my portfolio at placement

I was glad that there were high expectations

It was enjoyable, and they were a really nice team,

I think that made a difference for me.
 I thought, "oh my god, this is a lot,
 I'm only a student, I'm not getting paid for it,"
 I had a great practice educator, she was really, really good.
 She always made time for me.
 She was very reflective.
 if I ever needed help on anything, or wanted some assistance, she was always there to help me She
 pushed me, but then would always be there to support me if I needed that extra support.
 I definitely took on her as a role model, and observed her a lot in her practice,
 I suppose I have tried to,
 I hadn't really thought about it.
 My mum has always been a really strong influence in my life.
 My parents aren't together, so it's always been my mum that's been there,
 I always want to do the best for her.
 I had the expectation for her as well, my practice educator,
 I wanted to do well,
 I wanted her to be proud of me, think "I've got a good student here."
 I suppose it was kind of a parallel.

 I do put high expectations on myself.
 I always do.
 I always want to do the best,
 I always set really high expectations
 I am a perfectionist, and it's hard being that in this job,
 You can't always do what you want to do, so I do always put high expectations on myself.
 I have done since I was at school.
 I always have.
 I was quite a high achiever at school.
 I did quite well in my levels,
 I got a number of awards and things from my year,
 I think during that three-year period of not knowing what I was doing,
 I felt really- I had absolutely no confidence.
 I'd done well at school,
 I'd done well at university,
 I'd gone to a good university,
 then I had these, "what am I doing with my life?"
 I suppose that lack in confidence really pushed me down quite a lot,
 When I came back I thought, "I really enjoy what I'm doing when I'm doing social work,"
 I felt like I was back to my achieving

I wanted to achieve.

Interviewer: How did you feel when you finished the course, you said successful, how did that feel?

I did feel a sense of achievement,

I did, I thought.

I've got a Master's, that's a good qualification, not everyone does that.

I was proud of myself.

It was hard work, and it did pay off.

I kind of got back to reality

I thought, "right, well I've got to get a job now."

I suppose it was a really short period of time, like "Oh, I've done really well, I've graduated.

Let's get back to actually earning some money, because I haven't been for the past two years."

I still sometimes feel like, I don't feel like one [professional].

I do feel like a novice.

I do feel like sometimes I'm out of my depth,

I really do.

I also feel,

I did my placement here,

I feel like the expectations that are sometimes placed on me wouldn't be placed on another Newly Qualified Social Worker,

I was on placement here- "C can do it ..."

I kind of feel like sometimes there's a bit more pressure placed on me

I was on placement here, and I knew what was happening,

I've carried on some of my cases.

I think other Newly Qualified Social Workers, ones who have started fairly recently, wouldn't have that same amount of pressure.

If I hadn't had my placement here, I would not in any way have felt confident getting a job in a children's team.

When I started my placement here,

I felt really like I didn't know what I was doing, at all.

Didn't feel like my degree had prepared me. I

It had given me knowledge of law, it'd given me knowledge of theory, methods it hadn't really told me what it was going to be like when I stepped into a children's team.

I learnt so much in that placement.

It was invaluable, that placement was.

If I hadn't had that ...

no, I would not have felt like I could have walked into a children's team.

I think there needed to be more of a balance.

You need to learn about theory, you need to learn about that side of things, but you need, "This is what it's going to be like."

I know people don't want to think about, you're going to have it hard- but that is what it's like. You are stressed.

There are times when your confidence is so low.

There are times when you question everything about your practice.

I think maybe having more people who were in front line practice come and speak to us, more focus on what it's actually going to be like.

There are going to be times when you're going to feel absolutely awful about yourself,
and you're going basically want to quit.

That I've thought already.

I just feel like sometimes it was too optimistic.

Not to say that everything's bad, because it's not, because I really enjoy it,
but there's a lot of- it wasn't that realistic.

My mum is really good. I talk to her about a lot of things.

I talk to my family, not specifically about cases, but about how I'm feeling about things.

I have a girl I was on placement with who I went to uni with, we're really close, we get through it together,

I'm having a few problems, we try and help each other.

I think a couple of weeks ago, I'd been out of the office for a while,

I'd been on training, things like that

I was taking a lot of my work home,

I could see it was affecting my mood,

I was snapping at people.

I spoke to a manager about it,

I need to do it that night, but I really don't need to do it that night, I can do it in the morning. Having those conversations with her,

We're really good team.

We help each other out.

Speaking to those more experienced members knowing that I'm not awful,

I'm not a horrible social worker,

I have got skills,

I have got qualities that are good.

You kind of feel like everything's bad that you're doing.

I've got this complaint against me, and it's not nice to have that.

You go home and you think, you go over every single little thing you've ever done with that family and think,

"What have I done that would make a complaint about."

This is the first one that I've ever had."

I think I've always been quite critical of myself.
 I've always had quite high expectations.
 When I don't achieve that, or when something goes wrong, I basically question everything.
 I say, "Everything about me is bad." You know what I mean? "
 I must be an awful social worker"
 I probably blow things out of proportion a little bit.
 I do like things to be right all the time, but this isn't a job where things always go right.
 The more I learn that, the more I get used to it.
 I was a middle child, maybe that's got something to do with it.
 I've always just felt like I've been quite a high achiever,
 I like people thinking good of me,
 I like people being proud of me.
 I want people to think that I've done well,
 When people don't like me or don't think that I've done something right,
 I really hate it.
 I absolutely hate it,
 I need to know that, because I've never been in a job where people don't like me.
 I've never been in a job where everything about you as a profession, a lot of people hate.
 You just have to say the name, and people go, "I'm not speaking to you."
 I suppose it's that kind of thing,
 I don't know.
 I think I've got a good management team.
 I've felt I'm a professional as well,
 I've had feedback from other professionals, when I've been feeling quite low.
 I had a conference last week that went really well
 Saying, "You did a really good job."
 Just things like that make me feel like, "Okay, all right, maybe I'm thinking everything went bad,
 but it didn't."
 I do feel valued,
 I do feel like this team is- it treats its employees well.
 I think having people in who work in social work- because the people that teach us haven't been in
 social work, some of them for like 25 years.
 I think having some guest speakers, and even coming to shadow for a day,
 I don't know- something that would give you a feel of that reality.
 I really get the emotional side of it, they don't- they say you need to have emotional resilience, but
 there isn't really much around what that means, or what it looks like, or what you should do in
 practice, because you do need emotional resilience.
 I struggle with that, I do.
 I struggle sometimes with my emotions, so I think that side of things would be so importan
 I didn't even know really what supervision was.

I just think having some people who work currently in social work coming to speak to you.
Just maybe having a question and answer session, I had so many questions that I'd want to ask someone.

I never had the opportunity to say, "Right, tell me about your day, tell me about- " because you know the processes, you know the procedures.

That doesn't mean that you know what it means to be a social worker, and to be in a frontline position.

I kind of got that impression that, "Yeah, you're prepared now."

I'm actually not at all prepared, but I don't really know what I'm meant to expect.

Knowing what it feels like from a person who's in that right now, because we didn't have any of that.

I feel like I don't know what I'm doing.

I feel like there's so much to learn,

I'm never going to know it all.

I really just question everything about my practice, whereas other days I feel like I'm doing a good job,

I feel like, "okay, I've made a difference," but sometimes it's hard when you have such limited resources to do the things you want to do.

Yeah, some days I do.

Some days I'm doing the worst job ever, and I want to leave and not come back. Crawl into a hole.

You know? I know I want to do it, and I know I enjoy it, but how long can I actually do this for?
How long can I put up with this stress that I feel?

Even on a weekend, Sunday night I'll get this- you start to feel it in the pit of your stomach, like what is going to happen this week?

What's going to come in? You never know what's going to happen.

So unpredictable, this job. One day you can have a placement that's going perfectly well; the next day, everything kicks off, and then you've got a breakdown,
you've got to deal with all of that. It's just a level of uncertainty.

I think for me,

I like things when they go the right when they are organized,

like I've got an hour to do this, right, okay.

I don't deal with crisis's very well.

That's one thing that I really have never dealt well with

I need to work on because I panic.

I'm a real panicer,

I go into like, "oh my god,"

I'm going to have to reign in, because the nature of the job is it's completely unknown, really.

That kind of makes me feel on edge.

I need to know what's happening,

I need to know when I'm doing it, when I'm going to be finished.

I like things to be done in a certain order, to be planned out properly.

I'm just a really organized person, and sometimes you just can't be organized in this job. Everything is constantly about prioritizing what you need to do then.

No, I don't really know why, that's just what I've always been like since I was at school.

I think the emotional resilience is important, because that level of unpredictability is a constant feature,

I think that would have been quite helpful.

I think emotional intelligence, we did like one lecture on it, and it was like, I don't even really know what it is.

Having more of a focus on that, and like I said with the reality, it's a very uncertain job, it's a very unpredictable job, would have probably prepared me a little bit better.

I think there's a lot of uncertainty in our team at the moment, a lot of changes.

We've had a lot of people leave.

We've had a lot of new people.

I think everyone's having a bit of, "god, this is just a lot at the moment." I think-

I've heard maybe things about managers.

I don't know, maybe it has something to do with that.

I feel this team supports me,

I feel like I could go to most people in the team and say, "I feel like I'm really struggling at the moment, can you help me?"

I see myself in this team, I do.

I see myself going through the stages, we've got TAP, we've got my ASYE first, then we move onto EPD

I can see myself becoming a practice educator.

I have thought about is maybe going to uni to become a lecturer,

but then I also enjoy that contact with families,

I enjoy that side of things, and whether I'd miss that.

I definitely see myself working my way through a natural development kind of...

I don't want those decisions,

I understand that I need the extra responsibilities,

I want the extra responsibilities, I want that experience, but I don't want to be a manager.

I never have been.

I never wanted to.

I think at the moment it's all very new, and it's kind of slotting into place.

I'm having those kind of crises, and I'm having the first things,

I'm having my first complaint,

I'm doing those first things, where I think in 6 months' time, I will have done some of them,

I will have probably dipped again, but I think I'll probably be more level,

I'll be getting on with my ASYE, and I'll be doing that side of things.

I'll probably be getting more complex cases, s

I'll be experiencing more things,
 I'll- don't know. I can't really say, it's really hard because you want to say everything's going to be okay,
 but I don't know.

I just think the work is really important,
 I think at the moment the degrees don't fully prepare you for the reality of what it is.
 I can't comment on adults, because I don't know anything about adults,
 I think with children there's a lot of work to be done in terms of making it more transferable.
 I think you need people who are doing it now, not people who did it 25 years-
 I'm not saying get rid of the lecturers and do it quickly.
 I think you need up-to-date knowledge and lecturers who are doing it now.
 I think so, because for two years you have this idea of what it's going to be like, and then you go into it and it's so much harder than you ever imagined it was going to be.
 I think if I'd been prepared, I would have been more ready for it.

I remember I did, for my dissertation
 I read one article and it was called "The Baptism of Fire," and that just summed it up for me. That is literally what it is, basically, and you hit the ground running.
 There isn't a time for, "you're a Newly Qualified Social Worker, right, okay," there isn't that time. There just aren't the resources or the capacity for you to have that, "oh well, for a couple months we'll just give you-" there is none of that.
 You go, straight away.

I do think having a conceptualized idea of what it's like at university doesn't transfer into practice, and therefore there's a difference in- there's a huge learning curve that you have to go really quickly through.

Do you know what I mean?
 I just found it one of the biggest transition- and that's why I commented on the fact I was a student here,
 I think that sometimes they, not forget, but because I've been here since like February,
 I think they have the perception that I've done a lot more than, you know, but I've still only been here three months.

In theory, I'm still that level.
 I think that sometimes is not always considered.
 I just wish there was more money [resources]. That would make things-
 I think the profession is really poorly regarded really has a poor reputation,
 I don't think that helps anyone.
 It makes our job ten times harder.
 You've got people telling you, "all you want to do is take my child away,"
 "no I don't, actually," but that's what you think, that's what you believe,
 I tell them that is not the truth it doesn't really make a difference.
 I think the profession as a whole has a poor reputation.